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ساڈھ بنگلور

Website: salarnews.in www.magzter.com 22 JUNE 2024 | SATURDAY | BENGALURU | 15 DHU'L-HIJJAH, 1445 AH Vol 4 | Issue No 151 | Pages: 8

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KEJRIWAL TO STAY IN JAIL AS HC PUTS BAIL ON HOLD

HC reserves order for 3 days to go through the records

NEW DELHI, 21 JUNE

Embattled Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal will have to remain in jail for now with Delhi High Court on Friday putting an interim stay on a trial court's order granting him bail in the money laundering case linked to the alleged excise scam.

The AAP National Convenor, who was arrested on 21 March by Enforcement Directorate (ED), could have walked out of Tihar jail on Friday had High Court not granted the interim relief to ED.

A vacation bench of Justice Sudhir Kumar Jain asked the parties to file submissions by 24 June. The court reserved the order for three days to go through the records. It also issued notice to Kejriwal seeking his response on ED's plea challenging the trial court's 20 June order by which he was granted bail. It listed the plea for hearing on 10 July.

Additional Solicitor General (ASG) S V Raju, representing the ED, contended that the trial court's order was "perverse", "one-sided" and "wrong-sided" and that the findings were based on irrelevant facts. The relevant facts, he claimed, were not considered by the special judge.

Seeking a stay on the trial court's order, he contended that ED was not given adequate opportunity to argue its case.

The application for stay was vehemently opposed by senior advocates Abhishek Singhvi and Vikram Chaudhari, representing Kejriwal. They said Article 21 does not exist for ED for which the liberty of a person figured low in priority.

Singhvi said the ED argued for 3 hours and 45 minutes of the 5 hours hearing before the trial judge.

Raju said after the order was passed, when ED lawyers urged the trial court to keep its order in abeyance for 48 hours to enable them to approach superior courts, the prayer was not considered.

He said the trial court did not even look at his reply on the ground that it was bulky and claimed that the trial court came to a conclusion that there was malafide on ED's part after considering wrong facts.

Raju contended that the trial court has given findings which are contrary to those of the high court while upholding Kejriwal's arrest.

"There is evidence that Kejriwal demanded Rs 100 crore but it was not considered by trial court," he argued.

"If Kejriwal is out with conditions imposed by the court, what is the prejudice. He is not a terrorist that he will harm the society if he is let out. What will happen if the chief minister of the state comes out on bail?" Singhvi argued. The trial court, in its bail order, held that prima facie Kejriwal's guilt was yet to be established and that the ED failed to furnish direct evidence linking him to the proceeds of crime in the money laundering case. —*PTI*

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Arvind Kejriwal could have walked out of Tihar jail on Friday had the High Court not granted interim relief to ED *PHOTO: PTI*

1,563 TO TAKE EXAM ON SUNDAY

SC refuses to stop counselling & NEET re-test

NEW DELHI, 21 JUNE

Supreme Court Friday refused to defer NEET-UG counselling process, scheduled to kick off on 6 July, saying it is not an "open and shut" exercise, even as the political pot kept boiling over the controversy-ridden exam with the opposition attacking the Centre over alleged paper leak and other irregularities.

National Testing Agency (NTA), under fire over the lapses in the conduct of NEET and UGC-NET, is gearing up to conduct on Sunday a retest for the medical entrance exam for 1,563 candidates who were earlier awarded grace marks to make up for the loss of time at six centres.

"While all other examination centres have changed, one centre in Chandigarh, where only two candidates will appear, will remain the same. Besides, officials from the agency and Union education ministry will also be present at these centres. ," a senior NTA official added. The NEET-UG examination was held on 5 May across 4,750 centres and around 24 lakh candidates appeared in it. The results were expected to be declared on 14 June were announced on 4 June, with the NTA saying the evaluation of the answer sheets got completed earlier. As many as 67 students scored a perfect 720, unprecedented in the NTA's history, with six from a centre in Haryana's Faridabad figuring in the list, raising suspicions about irregularities. It has been alleged that grace marks contributed to 67 students sharing the top rank. The apex court issued notices to NTA, the Centre and others on a petition seeking cancellation of the exam. A vacation bench of Justices Vikram Nath and SVN Bhatti posted the matter for hearing on 8 July along with other pending pleas alleging irregularities in conduct of the examination. —*PTI*

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PHOTO: PTI

JP Nadda likely to be Leader of House in RS

NEW DELHI, 21 JUNE

According to sources, senior BJP leader and Union Health Minister JP Nadda is likely to be leader of the House in the Rajya Sabha. Nadda was allocated the Health Ministry and the Chemicals and Fertilizers Ministry, a day after taking oath as a cabinet minister in the third Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government. He is also BJP's national president. His term ends this month. There were speculations that he would continue until the four upcoming state elections are completed this year and a new president is elected. Till the elections are over, a BJP President may be appointed to assist Nadda. As per BJP guidelines, a President is elected only after organisational elections are completed. —*Agencies*

After child's rape, mob targets cops to get accused

MUMBAI, 21 JUNE

At least 14 police personnel were injured after a group of persons allegedly pelted them with stones demanding the custody of a man, who was arrested for sexually assaulting and killing a six-year-old girl at Jamner in Maharashtra's Jalgaon district, police said on Friday. The incident of stone-pelting occurred around 9.30pm on Thursday outside the Jamner police station, they said. "A six-year-old girl was allegedly abducted, sexually assaulted and murdered at Chinchkheda Shivar village in Jamner on the night of 11 June. —*PTI*

Rajkot fire SIT report finds lapses, asks for legal reform

AHMEDABAD, 21 JUNE

A Special Investigation Team (SIT) appointed by the Gujarat government to probe 25 May Rajkot game zone fire incident, which claimed 27 lives, submitted its interim report on Friday to Minister of State for Home Harsh Sanghavi in Gandhinagar. In its 100-page interim report, the SIT, headed by senior IPS officer Subhash Trivedi, has suggested some changes to Section 33 of Gujarat Police Act (GP Act), which empowers local police to give various licenses to such game zones. Chief Justice Sunita Agarwal had then slammed the government and asked why no action was taken against these senior officials who had attended the opening ceremony of TRP Game Zone. —*PTI*

I'NTL DAY OF YOGA

People perform yoga on the 10th International Day of Yoga, at Vidhana Soudha, in Bengaluru, on Friday; PM Narendra Modi performs yoga in Srinagar. It is an annual event to celebrate and raise awareness about the benefits of yoga. It was established by the UN in 2014. The initiative for this was taken by Modi in his 2014 UN address and the resolution received global support, with 177 nations co-sponsoring it in the UNGA, where it was passed unanimously *PHOTO: PTI*

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BIHAR DYCM TO HEAD GST RATIONALISATION PANEL AFTER REJIG

NEW DELHI, 21 JUNE

Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Chaudhary has been appointed as the convenor of the GoM on GST rate rationalisation.

According to an official memorandum posted on the GST Council secretariat website, the other members of the reconstituted panel are Uttar Pradesh Finance Minister Suresh Kumar Khanna, Goa Transport Minister Mauvin Godinho, Rajasthan Medical, and Health Services Minister Gajendra Singh.

The GoM also includes West Bengal Finance Minister Chandrima Bhattacharya, Karnataka Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda, and Kerala Finance Minister KN Balagopal.

The seven-member GoM has been tasked with suggesting required rate rationalisation and correction of inverted duty structure with an objective of simplifying the rate structure, reviewing the GST exemption list and enhancing revenues from Goods and Services Tax (GST).

Currently, the GST regime has five broad tax slabs of zero, 5, 12, 18, and 28 per cent. A cess is levied over and above the highest 28 per cent rate on luxury and demerit goods. —*PTI*

Hasina begins 2-day India visit; to meet Modi today

NEW DELHI, 21 JUNE

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Friday began a two-day State visit to India with an aim to further expand the already close ties between the two countries.

Bangladesh is a key partner and trusted neighbour of India and Prime Minister Hasina's visit will give a major boost to the "celebrated bilateral partnership", external affairs ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said shortly after she arrived in Delhi. It is the first incoming bilateral state visit by a foreign leader after the formation of the new government in India following the Lok Sabha elections.

Modi and Hasina are scheduled to hold wide-ranging talks on Saturday during which both sides are likely to firm up a raft of agreements providing for cooperation in several sectors.Hasina was among seven top leaders from India's neighbourhood and the Indian Ocean region who attended the swearing-in ceremony of Modi and the Union council of ministers at the Rashtrapati Bhavan on 9 June.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar called on the visiting Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

The overall strategic ties between India and Bangladesh have been on an upswing in the last few years. —*PTI*

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar with Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at a meeting, in New Delhi on Friday *PHOTO: PTI*

Adhir resigns as WB Congress Chief

KOLKATA, 21 JUNE

Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury resigned as West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee's Chief on Friday. The decision comes following a meeting of the state unit of the committee, convened to review the party's poor performance in the state in the recently concluded Lok Sabha elections.

However, there has been no official confirmation from Congress leadership on whether his resignation was accepted. However, confirming his resignation, Chowdhury said, "Since Mallikarjun Kharge became Congress's National President, there was no state president. Now when a full-time President is appointed you will all come to know that."Chowdhury, a five-time party Lok Sabha MP from Murshidabad's Baharampur constituency, was defeated by former Indian cricketer and Trinamool Congress candidate Yusuf Pathan.

The resignation announcement comes a day after Congress's Rajya Sabha member and former Union Finance Minister P Chidambaram, held a 35-minute meeting with Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee at the state secretariat. Rumours have been rife about Chowdhury's disagreements with the party's high command over the former's "sour" relationship with TMC.

His differences with Kharge also surfaced during the Lok Sabha polls after he questioned Banerjee's loyalty to the Congress-led INDIA Opposition bloc. —*Agencies*

98 Indians died during Hajj in Saudi, says MEA

NEW DELHI, 21 JUNE

Ninety-eight Indians have died during the annual Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca largely due to natural causes, chronic illnesses and old age, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Friday.

MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said the total number of deaths of Indians in the entire Hajj period last year was 187. As many as 1,75,000 Indian pilgrims visited Mecca, Islam's holiest city, for Hajj this year. The Hajj period is from 9 May to 22 July.

"The deaths have been due to natural causes, chronic illnesses, and old age," he said. "Six people died on the day of Arafat and four were accident-related deaths. Last year, total deaths in the entire Haj period were 187," Jaiswal said. According to reports, more than 900 pilgrims have died this year during Haj that has been marked by heat waves. Some of the deaths have reportedly been due to heat-related illnesses as temperatures crossed over 50 degree Celsius in Mecca. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

- "The deaths have been due to natural causes, chronic illnesses, and old age," he said.

AMID SCORCHING SUMMER

Water in 150 reservoirs further dips to 21%

NEW DELHI, 21 JUNE

With scorching heat battering a large swathes of India over the past few weeks, water available in the 150 main reservoirs across the country further dipped to just 21 per cent of their total live storage capacity.

The Central Water Commission (CWC) has released the live storage status of 150 key reservoirs across India in its latest bulletin. These reservoirs, crucial for hydroelectric projects and water supply, have a combined live storage capacity of 178.784 billion cubic meters (BCM), which is approximately 69.35 per cent of the total live storage capacity created in the country.

As of Thursday, the live storage available in these reservoirs is 37.662 BCM, which is 21 per cent of their total capacity. Overall, the live storage available across the 150 reservoirs stands at 54.310 BCM against the estimated total capacity of 257.812 BCM.

This marks a significant decrease from the same period last year, when the live storage was 46.883 BCM.

States like Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu, with 42 reservoirs, have a total capacity of 53.334 BCM. The available storage is 8.508 BCM (16 per cent of capacity), which is lower than last year's 21 per cent and the normal storage of 20 per cent.

Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, and Rajasthan, have 10 monitored reservoirs with a total capacity of 19.663 BCM. The current live storage is 5.488 BCM (28 per cent of capacity), which is lower than last year's 39 per cent and the normal storage of 31 per cent.

The eastern region covering Assam, Jharkhand, Odisha, West Bengal, Tripura, Nagaland, and Bihar has 23 reservoirs with a total capacity of 20.430 BCM. The available storage is 3.873 BCM (19 per cent of capacity), slightly better than last year's 18 per cent but below the normal storage of 23 per cent. In the western region, Gujarat and Maharashtra, with 49 reservoirs, have a total capacity of 37.130 BCM. —*PTI*

This is a significant decrease from the same period last year *PHOTO: PTI*

Rs 15-25L bribe taken for jobs at Belagavi board: CBI

CBI says 5 officials and 14 candidates who paid bribes held

NEW DELHI, 21 JUNE

Candidates applying for jobs as 'mazdoor', 'dai', 'coolie' and 'chowkidar' at Belgaum Cantonment Board allegedly paid bribes to the tune of Rs 15-25 lakh, CBI has said in its FIR related to the alleged recruitment scam.

In its FIR, which was made public on Friday, the agency has booked five officials of the board and 14 candidates who allegedly paid the bribes.

CBI began its probe last year with a preliminary enquiry on the basis of a complaint from a board member alleging corruption and illegalities in the recruitment undertaken in 2022-23. The findings of the enquiry suggested that during 2022-23, 31 candidates for the post of mechanic, assistant sanitary inspector, coolie, mali, peon, dai, etc were recruited, officials said.

Officer Superintendent Mahalingeshwar Y Talukdar, Computer Programmer Basavaraj S Gudodagi, Data Entry Operator Prakash C Goundadkar, Head Master Parasharam S Birje and Assistant Teacher Uday S Patil -- who have been booked -- worked in various capacities in examination process as per orders issued by then CEO, they said.

CBI has alleged that the then CEO of the Cantonment Board Anand K (now deceased) was the controlling and appointing authority for the recruitment and was involved in setting the question paper and answer keys for the examination, they said. In conspiracy with the five officials, Anand demanded and accepted illegal gratification in the range of Rs 15-25 lakh from the aspirants to influence the selection, CBI has alleged.

The CBI enquiry findings showed that the question paper was set only in English but most of the candidates could not read and understand it. "It is alleged that eligible candidates were either rejected or not qualified as they could not pay the illegal gratification to the above-named public servants. It was alleged that many of the selected candidates are related or known to the officials of the Cantonment Board," the FIR alleged. —*PTI*

The findings of the enquiry suggested that during 2022-23, 31 candidates for the posts of mechanic, assistant sanitary inspector, coolie, mali, peon, dai, etc were recruited

PHOTO: PTI

MESCOM ordered to pay Rs 5 lakh for crop damages

SHIVAMOGGA, 21 JUNE

District Consumer Disputes Redressal Forum has ordered MESCOM of Shivamogga district to pay over Rs 5 lakh in compensation to farmers whose sugarcane crops in Soraba taluk were destroyed in a fire caused by snapping of a wire. On 26 December 2022, the power line passing through the land parcels of farmers Raman Gowda, Lok Gowda and Sulochana in Koppadala village snapped, igniting the sugarcane crops. Sugarcane crops totalling 225 tons spread across 4 acres and 3 guntas were destroyed. The three farmers filed a petition against MESCOM (Mangalore Electricity Supply Company Ltd). The farmers sought compensation totalling Rs 8.25 lakh with 18% interest for damages. —*Salar News*

BJP to felicitate its LS MPs, Union Ministers today

BENGALURU, 21 JUNE

A BJP unit will felicitate its 19 Lok Sabha MPs and Union Ministers from the state on 22 June, BJP State Chief BY Vijayendra said on Friday. The felicitation ceremony will be held at the palace grounds in the city, he said. Speaking to reporters at BJP office in Malleswaram, Vijayendra said all the MPs, MLAs, legislative council members and state office bearers will participate in this event. In the recently concluded Lok Sabha election, BJP won 17 seats while its ally JD(S) got two out of 28 constituencies.The ruling Congress won nine seats. —*PTI*

2 held for vehicle thefts, Rs 1cr worth vehicles seized

BENGALURU, 21 JUNE

City police arrested two men from Shivamogga for allegedly stealing vehicles and recovered eight cars valuing a total of Rs 1 crore. The accused used to rent cars from local car owners and create fake documents and convert them as their own cars and sell them, a statement from City police said. The thefts came to light after a man filed a complaint that his Maruti Suzuki went missing as he could not track his car through the GPS. During the interrogation, the accused confessed that he had stolen eight cars. They removed the GPS from the rented cars and did not return the vehicles to the owners. In a similar case, Konanakunte police arrested a man who had stolen 60 cycles estimated at Rs 12 lakh from Koli Farm Gate in Bannerghatta Main Road. During the interrogation, the accused confessed that he wanted to live a luxurious life and so he stole expensive bicycles from the City. He confessed that he stole 25 bicycles from Begur Koppa road, 10 bicycles from Konanakunte, 25 bicycles from Bukkasagara village in Anekal. —*Salar News*

Lucky Ali files plaint for alleged land grabbing

BENGALURU, 21 JUNE

Singer Lucky Ali has filed a complaint against IAS officer Rohini Sindhuri, her husband Sudhir Reddy and brother-in-law Madhusudan Reddy to Karnataka Lokayukta Police for allegedly grabbing his land in the outskirts of the City, on Friday. Ali alleged that the bureaucrat has used her powerful position in the government and occupied the land illegally. The case has been registered at Yelahanka New Town police station in the City. A few years ago, Lucky Ali took to social media and alleged that the local police are in support of the IAS officer and requested the higher officials to step into the issue. He also then claimed that the 'land mafia' had conspired to grab the farm illegally. The property is reportedly located at Yelahanka's Kenchenahalli area. The singer posted an acknowledgement of the complaint he has filed with the Lokayukta on his X handle. Rohini Sindhuri's brother-in-law has claimed that the property was purchased in 2012 from Lucky Ali's brother Mansoor Ali and that he has all documents to prove his claim on the land. —*Salar News*

'NEW CHAPTER AHEAD'

DKS denies plans to contest bypoll from Channapatna

BENGALURU, 21 JUNE

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Friday ruled out contesting in the bypoll to Channapatna Assembly constituency.

On Wednesday, Shivakumar said, "A significant change in my political career happened from Channapatna. I have come to Anjaneya temple in Kengal to start a new chapter in my political career."

This gave rise to speculations that he was willing to contest from Channapatna segment, which fell vacant after MLA HD Kumaraswamy won Mandya Lok Sabha election.

BJP MLA and former minister S Suresh Kumar called the purported "bypoll in Kanakapura" a "Tughlaq-like decision" and a wastage of public money.

Shivakumar said: "Why will there be any byelection in Kanakapura? I am an MLA from Kanakapura and the State president of my party (Congress).

- Ex- minister S Suresh Kumar called the purported "bypoll in Kanakapura" a "Tughlaq-like decision"

There is a responsibility on me. This is my region and I am a leader there," Shivakumar said on Friday. "Me and Chief Minister Siddaramaiah will lead the elections (in Channapatna)," he added.

Shivakumar said he has only asked people there to support him. "I am from that district (Ramanagara). I have asked the voters there to give us strength... They will favour us if they trust us," the DCM said.

Commenting on those who criticised him, Shivakumar said, "Those who are writing the obituary of my political career should know that there is a bigger power behind me, which is people's power." —*PTI/Salar News*

CM expels 2 Vijayanagara edu officials over HDI dip

BENGALURU, 21 JUNE

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has suspended Deputy Director of Public Instruction Department and Block Education Officer after Vijayanagara district fell from 10th to 27th position in education in Human Development Index.

The Chief Minister reviewed the progress of Vijayanagara district and took Education Department Secretary Ritesh Kumar Singh to task expressing his displeasure at the status of the district.

Siddaramaiah also reviewed the agricultural activities in the district and disbursed Rs 130 crore as drought relief. "There should be no shortage of seeds and fertilizers. The lives of the farmers are not to be played with."

Siddaramaiah said if the first round of seeds dispersed does not germinate then a second round will be distributed. He warned the officials that disciplinary actions would be taken against them if there were complaints from the farmers. Furthermore, the Chief Minister directed Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board officials to rectify the 52 drinking water units in the district that have stopped working. —Salar News

MINISTER SEEKS CBI PROBE IN NEET ROW

RAICHUR, 21 JUNE

Karnataka Medical Education and Skill Development Minister Sharan Prakash Patil on Friday termed NEET-UG 2024 exam a "massive scam" of the Modi government and demanded that the Centre order a CBI probe.

He said that more and more irregularities in the NEET exam are being exposed and blamed the Centre's failures for the current mess. In a statement issued by the minister's office, Patil said that the people of the entire country suspect the involvement of many people in this scam.

Expressing the State government's limitations in seeking exemption from NEET, Patil cited Supreme Court order and legal restrictions. —*PTI*

APARTMENT LIFTS OPERATE WITHOUT BESCOM'S NOD

BENGALURU, 21 JUNE

The apartment complex in Subramanyapura, Doddakallasandra, has been issued a notice from BESCOM stating that the builders had not registered the lifts with the authority and had been operating them illegally, on Friday.

The residents from the apartment complex applied for the RTI seeking information about the permanent electricity connection of the apartment complex after developers and the builders claimed that the permission had been taken from the BESCOM.

This has raised significant concerns among residents about the legal status and safety of the apartment complex. Despite multiple complaints, officials have ignored the problem for a year and a half without taking any legal action against the builders.

Additional Chief Electrical Inspector Padmanbha K stated, "We have issued a statement to BESCOM to disconnect the power, and after the issuance of the order, it does not come under us." —*Salar News*

WEATHER FORECAST

Red alert issued in coastal dists, warning of heavy rains

BENGALURU, 21 JUNE

A Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Centre (KSNDMC) has issued a red alert for coastal Karnataka, which is likely to receive extremely heavy rainfall on Saturday. It also said thunderstorms with lightning and gusty winds (30-40kmph) are likely at isolated places across the State.

According to a KSNDMC advisory, between 23 and 26 June isolated heavy rains are also expected in certain areas of the Krishna basin.

India Meteorological Department (IMD) has also issued a weather forecast stating that coastal and adjacent districts in interior Karnataka are very likely to receive heavy to very heavy rains.

Although the Southwest Monsoon has further advanced into some more parts of Maharashtra, the remaining parts of Vidarbha, some parts of Madhya Pradesh, some other parts of Chhattisgarh and Odisha, some parts of Gangetic West Bengal, remaining parts of Sub-Himalayan West Bengal, some parts of Jharkhand and coastal and adjacent districts of interior State are likely to receive heavy to very heavy with isolated extreme rainfall between 21 and 25 June, it said.

Strong winds as well as possibilities of land slides are predicted too. —*PTI*

Multi-level parking opens at Freedom Park

BENGALURU, 21 JUNE

Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) inaugurated a state-of-the-art multi-level parking facility near Freedom Park on Friday.

The two-storeyed structure aims to mitigate parking issues for vehicle owners travelling to areas such as Gandhi Nagar, Chickpet, Cubbon Park and MG Road.

The solar-powered facility can accommodate 600 cars and 750 two-wheelers.

BBMP said the new facility built at Gandhinagar is India's first smart parking complex.

Major parking ban in Gandhinagar

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar today said that parking will be banned for a stretch of one kilometre on the main roads of Gandhinagar, in order to ease traffic congestion.

"People can park their vehicles and use commuter vehicles to Vidhana Soudha, the railway station and other places.

This will help thousands of people.

It is a pilot project and this model will be extended to other parts of the City," he said.

Designed with inclusivity and security in mind, the multi-level parking unit offers wheelchairs and walkers for the specially-abled.

Security is ensured with the installation of 83 CCTV cameras, and an Automatic Number Plate (ANPR) system at entry and exit points. —*Salar News*

PARKING FEES

Duration	Two-wheelers	Autos/cars
1 hour	₹ 15	₹ 25
2 hours	₹ 25	₹ 40
2 to 4 hours	₹ 40	₹ 65
4 to 6 hours	₹ 55	₹ 90
6 to 8 hours	₹ 70	₹ 115
8 to 10 hours	₹ 85	₹ 140
10 to 12 hours	₹100	₹ 165

'Pavithra hit Renukaswamy with slippers'

BENGALURU, 21 JUNE

Actor Pavithra Gowda, the prime accused in the Renukaswamy murder case, had beaten up the victim with her slippers, according to a recent remand note presented by the police in court, which suggests that she was at the site of the murder for a certain period of time.

The actress has been named as accused number one in the case, allegedly for being the instigator, while leading Kannada film actor Darshan Thoogudeepa is accused number two, who allegedly executed the murder. The information on the police remand note indicates that Pavithra herself was present at the site of the murder of Renukaswamy.

Police said Darshan Thoogudeepa had contacted several individuals soon after the alleged killing, while another accused has confessed that the victim was administered electric shock..

State Social Welfare Minister HC Mahadevappa claimed that there has been no Cabinet discussion regarding the Renukaswamy murder case. —*Salar News*

Renukaswamy

PHOTO: X

SIDDARAMAIAH, DKS JOIN IN

International Yoga Day celebrated with fanfare in State

BENGALURU, 21 JUNE

International Yoga Day was celebrated with much fanfare across Karnataka on Friday. The main event took place on the grand steps of Vidhana Soudha where Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot along with Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao, Legislative Council Chairperson Basavaraj Horatti and senior government officials took part in the event.

This year's theme 'Yoga for Self and Society' reflects yoga's dual benefits for personal health and social harmony. A large number of students too took part in the event and did Yogasanas. Speaking on the occasion, Gehlot highlighted the profound impact of yoga on mental peace and emotional satisfaction. He also underscored yoga's deep roots in Indian culture and its global significance. "Yoga has been an integral part of our culture and traditions since ancient times. Its importance is well-documented in our scriptures and is now recognised worldwide, solidifying India's position as the Guru of Yoga," the Governor said.

In Ballari, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah participated in the International Yoga Day event, which was organised by the Santosh Lad Foundation and Shvasa Yoga Samstha. Labour Minister Santosh Lad, government officials, students and celebrities joined Siddaramaiah on Yoga Day at JSW Township in Ballari.

BJP too organised Yoga day event at its state headquarters Jagannath Bhavan at Malleswaram in the City in which BJP state president BY Vijayendra, MLA Dr CN Ashwath Narayan and several others participated. Similar events were organised in all the district headquarters of the State including Hassan, Shivamogga, Mysuru, Belagavi, Bidar, Tumakuru, Dakshina Kannada and Raichur. —*PTI*

(Clockwise from top left) Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, Labour Minister Santosh Lad and others perform yoga in Ballari on the occasion of International Yoga Day on Friday; Governor Thawar Chand Gehlot, DyCM DK Shivakumar and Legislative Council Chairman Basavaraj Horatti in front of Vidhana Soudha; and HD Kumaraswamy in Bengaluru, on Friday

PHOTOS: SALAR

PHOTO: PTI

Cracks seen on newly opened Atal Setu bridge: Cong

MUMBAI, 21 JUNE

Maharashtra Congress President Nana Patole on Friday alleged corruption in the construction of the Atul Setu sea bridge connecting south Mumbai to Navi Mumbai, saying that cracks have appeared on it within months of inauguration, posing a threat to people's lives. Patole, who inspected the bridge during the day, claimed that the construction quality of the bridge was poor and that a portion of the road has caved in by one foot. However, the ruling BJP as well as the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority said that the cracks were not on the bridge itself but on the approach road from Ulwe in Navi Mumbai. —*PTI*

EC to update voters' list in J&K, M'rashtra, J'khand

NEW DELHI, 21 JUNE

The Election Commission on Friday said it has initiated preparations for forthcoming assembly elections in Haryana, Maharashtra and Jharkhand with updation of electoral rolls in these states along with that in Jammu and Kashmir. 1 July, will be the qualifying date for roll updation. For the just-held Lok Sabha polls, the voters' list was updated with 1 January as the qualifying date. Qualifying date helps establish number of voters on a given date in a state or in the country. The term of the existing legislative assemblies in the three states are going to end on 3 November, 26 November and 5 January, 2025 respectively and elections to these legislative assemblies are required to be conducted before the completion of their terms. —*PTI*

Cong politicising pro-tem Speaker issue: Kiren Rijiju

NEW DELHI, 21 JUNE

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju on Friday slammed the Congress for politicising the appointment of Lok Sabha pro-tem Speaker and asserted that conventions were followed in selecting BJP leader Bhartruhari Mahtab who has the longest uninterrupted tenure as a member of the Lower House. President Droupadi Murmu has appointed Mahtab, a seven-term Lok Sabha MP from Odisha, as the pro-tem Speaker, who administers oath/affirmation to the newly elected members of the Lok Sabha. Congress accused the BJP-led government of "destroying parliamentary norms" by ignoring the claim of Suresh, an eight-term Lok Sabha MP, to the post. Rijiju claimed that Suresh, was not a member of the Lok Sabha in 1998 and 2004 and hence did not have an uninterrupted tenure in the Lok Sabha. He accused the Congress leaders of "spreading lies"on the issue. —*PTI*

Telangana BRS MLA Srinivas Reddy joins Congress

HYDERABAD, 21 JUNE

In a major setback to BRS, senior party MLA and former Telangana legislative Assembly speaker Pocharam Srinivas Reddy on Friday joined the ruling Congress in the state. Telangana Chief Minister and state Congress President A Revanth Reddy, who called on Srinivas at his residence here, said the BRS leader joined Congress in the interest of the welfare of the state's farming community. The government will seek suggestions from Srinivas on farmers' welfare, the Chief Minister said, adding that he will be given due respect. Srinivas said he joined Congress to extend support Revanth's initiatives for farmers' welfare and with hope that the problems of ryots would be resolved. —*PTI*

India slams Canada Parl's silent 'tribute' to Nijjar

India says it oppose all moves giving political space to extremism

NEW DELHI, 21 JUNE

India on Friday was critical of the Canadian parliament observing "one minute silence" in the memory of Khalistan extremist Hardeep Singh Nijjar, who was gunned down in Surrey, British Columbia, in June last year.

"We naturally oppose any moves giving political space to extremism and advocacy of violence," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said.

In an unusual move, the Canadian parliament observed "one minute silence" two days ago in memory of Nijjar.

The relations between the two countries came under severe strain following Trudeau's allegations in September last year of a "potential" involvement of Indian agents in Nijjar's killing.

India has been maintaining that the main issue between the two countries is that of Canada giving space to pro-Khalistan elements operating from Canadian soil with impunity. Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra last week said India's main issue with Canada continues to be the political space that Ottawa provides to anti-India elements which advocate extremism and violence.

Nijjar, who was declared a terrorist by India, was shot dead outside a gurdwara in British Columbia on 18 June last year.

Canadian Parliament observed one minute silence in memory of Nijjar on Wednesday PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

India reaffirms support for Dalai Lama

India reiterated its stance on the Dalai Lama's position, emphasising his "revered" status and the respect accorded to him by the Indian people.

India on ABC documentary

Meanwhile, India on Friday described as "blatant untruths" the content of a documentary made by ABC News that claimed to uncover alleged attempts of Indian intelligence agents to interfere in Australia's "national security". External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said the documentary appeared to serve a particular agenda to "malign" India. —*PTI/ANI*

Atishi goes on fast demanding water for Delhi from Haryana

NEW DELHI, 21 JUNE

Delhi Water Minister Atishi on Friday began her indefinite hunger strike in south Delhi's Bhogal to press on her demand for more water from Haryana.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's wife Sunita Kejriwal, along with AAP MP Sanjay Singh and Delhi Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj, were present as Atishi began her fast.

Sunita Kejriwal read out a message from the Chief Minister, who is currently lodged in Tihar jail, in which he expressed hope that Atishi's 'tapasya' would be successful.

He said he was immensely pained by seeing on TV the plight of the people facing water shortage amid the ongoing intense heatwave, he said.

"It's our culture to provide water to the thirsty. Delhi gets water from neighbouring states. We hoped support of neighbouring states in such intense heat. But, Haryana reduced Delhi's water share.

She said her appeal to the Haryana government and a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for help did not yield any result and Delhi was not getting adequate water. Delhi gets 1005 MGD water which is supplied to people in the city. —*ANI*

Sunita Kejriwal with Atishi Singh and Sanjay Singh during hunger strike in New Delhi on Friday PHOTO: PTI

YSRCP LEADER CHANGES OWN NAME POST LOSING TO PAWAN KALYAN

AMARAVATI, 21 JUNE

Senior YSRCP leader Mudragada Padmanabham has officially changed his name to 'Padmanabha Reddy', fulfilling his pledge made during the election campaign, after he failed to ensure the defeat of Janasena Chief Pawan Kalyan in the recently concluded Assembly polls.

The septuagenarian changed his name following the victory of Kalyan in Pithapuram Assembly constituency.

In the run-up to the polls, the YSRCP leader had challenged that he would defeat Kalyan.

"Nobody forced me to change my name. I have changed it on my own volition," Reddy told media.

However, he complained that the Janasena Chief's fans and followers were allegedly abusing him. —*PTI*

Ensure return of people displaced by post-poll violence: Calcutta HC

Kolkata, 21 June

The Calcutta High Court on Friday directed the West Bengal government to take steps to ensure that people displaced due to alleged post-poll violence in the state return to their homes. It directed the police to keep a strict vigil in the areas where violence allegedly took place and ensure that such incidents do not recur. The directive was issued by a division bench presided by Justice Harish Tandon while hearing petitions regarding allegations of violence in West Bengal after the Lok Sabha elections. The court had earlier ordered the deployment of the central forces in the state to continue till 21 June. —*PTI*

ED acting as if Kejri 'most wanted terrorist': Sunita

NEW DELHI, 21 JUNE

- The Court put on hold the trial court order granting bail to Kejriwal till it hears ED's plea challenging the relief granted to him in the laundering case linked to the excise scam

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's wife Sunita Kejriwal lashed out at the Enforcement Directorate (ED) for challenging her husband's bail order in the High Court, accusing it of behaving as if he was the "most wanted terrorist in India".

Speaking in south Delhi's Bhogal where Delhi Water Minister Atishi began an indefinite hunger strike to press on her demand for getting more water from Haryana, Sunita Kejriwal said dictatorship in the country has crossed all limits.

"It was only yesterday your chief minister got bail. In the morning, the order was supposed to be uploaded. This happened as if Kejriwal is the most wanted terrorist in India," Sunita Kejriwal said.

"Dictatorship in the country has crossed all limits. The Enforcement Directorate (ED) does not want to give anyone liberty and has gone to the High Court against the chief minister demanding a stay (on his bail). The (court's) decision is yet to come. We hope the high court will deliver justice," she added.

The Delhi High Court on Friday put on hold the trial court order granting bail to Kejriwal till it hears ED's plea challenging the relief granted to him in the money laundering case linked to the alleged excise scam.

ED mentioned its plea challenging the trial court's order before a bench of Justices Sudhir Kumar Jain and Ravinder Dudeja. —*PTI*

Cong holds nation-wide protest against irregularities in NEET

NEW DELHI, 21 JUNE

Congress protested across the country over the alleged irregularities and demanded the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, who skipped the Delhi University's Yoga Day event where some students held a protest against the alleged irregularities. The protests came a day after Pradhan ruled out any immediate action towards cancelling the NEET, saying the government cannot jeopardise careers of lakhs of students who cleared the exam rightfully because of isolated incidents of malpractices.

Delhi Congress workers on Friday held a demonstration near the BJP headquarters here over the alleged irregularities.

The demonstration was led by Delhi Congress President Devender Yadav.

West Bengal Youth Congress activists staged the protests in central Kolkata's Moulali area where Pradesh Congress Committee President Adhir Ranjan Choudhury was present. Former Chhattisgarh chief minister Bhupesh Baghel hit out at Centre said an independent inquiry should be conducted into it under the supervision of a sitting judge of the Supreme Court. Meanwhile, Assam Congress President Bhupen Kumar Borah claimed that states ruled by BJP and its allies have become the "nerve centre" of question paper leaks, and the case of NEET-UG is the latest example of that.

Madhya Pradesh senior leader Digvijaya Singh said that corruption plagues every appointment in the BJP-led regime who led the protest in the Roshanpura square. —*PTI*

Police personnel detain Congress workers protesting over NEET row in New Delhi on Friday PHOTO: PTI

> **In the last five years, papers of 43 recruitment exams have been leaked in the country. Paper leak has become a national problem of our country under BJP rule which has ruined the future of crores of youth so far**
>
> -Priyanka Gandhi, Congress leader

BIHAR DyCM URGES CBI PROBE AGAINST TEJASHWI YADAV

PATNA, 21 JUNE

Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Kumar Sinha on Friday said a request will be made to Chief Minister Nitish Kumar to recommend a CBI probe into the suspected links of the arrested prime suspect in the NEET "paper leak" with officials associated with RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav.

Sinha on Thursday had claimed that officials associated with Yadav were in constant touch with prime suspect-- Sikander Prasad Yadvendu--in the NEET "paper leak" and had demanded a 'high-level' probe into the matter. "Recommending a probe by any independent agency like the CBI is the prerogative of the CM...we will meet him and urge him to do the needful in the matter pertaining to suspected links of arrested accused in the NEET 'paper leak' case with officials associated with Yadav," he said. —*PTI*

GETS STANDING OVATION

After 2 yrs, Naidu returns to Andhra Assembly

AMARAVATI, 21 JUNE

Telugu Desam Party Chief and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Friday returned to the state Assembly after a gap of over two years.

The sixteenth Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly began on Friday and Naidu along with Nara Lokesh and Nandamuri Balakrishna took oath as members.

Naidu had vowed in November 2021 that he would return to the Assembly only after becoming Chief Minister.

He was given a standing ovation as he arrived in the House as the Chief Minister of the state for a fourth time.

TDP MLA G Butchaiah Chowdary presided over proceedings as the Pro-tem Speaker.

The session commenced at 9.45 am in the Assembly Hall.

Actor-politician and Janasena Chief Pawan Kalyan entered the House for the first time in his 16-year-old political career as Pithapuram MLA and Deputy Chief Minister.

On Wednesday, Kalyan took charge as Deputy Chief Minister and Minister of Panchayat Raj and Rural Development, Environment, Forests, Science and Technology and Rural Water Supply.

TDP Supremo had taken oath as Andhra Chief Minister on 12 June along with his council of ministers.

His party had fought the Andhra Pradesh Assembly elections as well as the Lok Sabha polls in partnership with BJP and the Janasena Party.

TDP-BJP-Janasena Party alliance registered a landslide victory in the Assembly as well as parliamentary elections.

TDP has 135 MLAs in the Andhra Pradesh assembly while Janasena Party has 21 and BJP eight. The opposition YSR Congress Party has 11 MLAs. —*ANI*

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu takes oath as a member of the State Legislative Assembly in Amaravati on Friday PHOTO: PTI

'HURRIEDLY PASSED'

Didi in letter to PM seeks junking of new crime laws

NEW DELHI, 21 JUNE

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to defer the implementation of the three "hurriedly passed" criminal laws that are set to be rolled out on 1 July, saying it would enable Parliament to review them afresh.

In a letter to Prime Minister Modi, she expressed "grave concern" over the impending implementation of the three laws - The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNA) 2023, The Bharatiya Sakhsya Act (BSA) 2023, and The Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) 2023.

She noted that the three bills were passed in Lok Sabha at a time when 146 MPs had been suspended.

"The outgoing government of yours had passed these three critical bills unilaterally, and with absolutely no debate. That day, almost 100 members of the Lok Sabha had been suspended and a total 146 MPs of the both Houses were thrown out of Parliament," Banerjee said.

"The Bills were passed in an authoritarian manner in that dark hour of democracy. Matter deserves review now," she said.

"I urge your esteemed office now to consider at least a deferment of the implementation date. Reasons are two-fold: ethical, and practical," she said. She said significant legislative changes should be placed before the newly elected Parliament for fresh deliberation and scrutiny. Banerjee said the request for postponement also stems from a pragmatic assessment of the challenges and preparatory work required for a smooth transition, particularly concerning the training of law enforcement personnel and judicial officers.

"Any far-reaching legal change requires meticulous groundwork beforehand to ensure effective enforcement and administration and we do not have any reason to avert such homework," she said. The three new criminal laws will come into force from 1 July, Union Law and Justice minister Arjun Ram Meghwal has said. —*PTI*

Mamata Banerjee PHOTO: PTI

M'rashta ministers meet protesting OBC activists

CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR, 21 JUNE

Three Maharashtra Ministers and a member of the legislative council on Friday met OBC activists Laxman Hake and Navnath Waghmare and urged them to end their fast, which entered the ninth day.

The delegation comprising ministers Atul Save, Uday Samant and Girish Mahajan, and MLC Gopichand Padalkar met the activists at the protest site at Wadigodri village in Jalna district. Newly-elected Shiv Sena MP Sandipan Bhumre was also present.

Mahajan also called up Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis from the stage and made them talk to the protesting activists.

Later, Padalkar said a meeting between a delegation of the OBC community.

However, Hake and Waghmare, who have been fasting since 13 June, refused to halt their agitation and instead, demanded a written assurance from the government that the OBC quota won't be diluted.

The two are opposed to activist Manoj Jarange's demand over implementation of the draft notification that recognises Kunbis as "sage soyare" (blood relatives) of Maratha community members. —*PTI*

> **The Maharashtra government is trying to create rift between Maratha, OBC communities. The Maratha community will not allow tension to simmer among communities in villages**
>
> -Manoj Jarange, Activist

PHOTO: PTI

Curfew relaxed in violence-hit Balasore for 6 hrs

BALASORE, 21 JUNE

Curfew was relaxed for six hours in Odisha's Balasore town to allow people to buy essential items, an official said. Curfew was clamped in this northern Odisha town on Monday night following a group clash in which 10 people were injured in stone pelting incidents. Internet service also remains suspended in the town. The internet services will remain suspended till 10 am of 22 June, an official notification said. Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi has appealed to the people to maintain peace. "Curfew was relaxed from 6am to 12 noon. All shops and commercial establishments were allowed to remain open and to allow people to purchase essential items for their daily needs," the official said, adding that no incident took place for two consecutive nights on Wednesday and Thursday. Though people were allowed in marketplaces, the administration kept a vigil on the possible public gatherings of people during the curfew relaxation period.—*PTI*

4 killed after bus overturns in Himachal Pradesh

SHIMLA, 21 JUNE

Four people were killed while three others sustained serious injuries when a bus overturned on the Kuddu-Giltari road in Himachal Pradesh's Shimla district early Friday, police said. The Himachal Roadways Transport Corporation (HRTC) bus, with seven persons on board, was on its way to Giltari from Kuddu when the accident took place around 6.45am near Chauri Kainchi after the driver lost control over the vehicle.While two people identified as Birma Devi and Dhan Shah died on the spot, bus driver Karam Das and conductor Rakesh Kumar succumbed to injuries on way to hospital, Superintendent of Police, Shimla, Sanjeev Kumar Gandhi, said. The injured have been admitted to a hospital. "Preliminary enquiry has been ordered in the accident", Managing Director, HRTC, Rohan Chand Thakur said.—*PTI*

Ch'garh BSF jawan found dead, cops suspect suicide

KANKER, 21 JUNE

A Border Security Force (BSF) jawan was found dead with a bullet wound to the head in Chhattisgarh's Kanker district on Friday, with police suspecting that he died by suicide. Head Constable Madan Kumar from BSF's 94th battalion went missing on Thursday when a team of his unit was out on a Road Security Operation (RSO) in Chhote Bethiya area, a senior police official said. Kumar was posted at Marbeda BSF camp located under Bande police station area. The RSO was launched between Marbeda and Chhote Bethiya and Kumar was found missing after the patrolling team returned to its base, he said.—*PTI*

UP man held for cooking meat near temple stairs

MATHURA, 21 JUNE

A man allegedly found cooking meat near the stairs of a temple here was thrashed by some devotees and was later arrested, police said on Friday. The incident happened at Ladli Temple in Barsana town on Thursday evening, they said Police said Sanjai, a Rajasthan native, has been living in Barsana for the last couple of years and used to beg in and around the temple area. "He was booked under Section 295 (defiling place of worship) of the Indian Penal Code and sent to judicial custody," said Inspector Arvind Nirval.—*PTI*

World looking at yoga as agent of global good: PM

He says yoga will transform economy of J&K by attracting tourists

SRINAGAR, 21 JUNE

The world is looking at yoga as a powerful agent of global good, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on International Yoga Day on Friday while stressing that it has the potential to transform the economy of Jammu and Kashmir by attracting more tourists.

Choosing the SKICC on the picturesque banks of the Dal Lake to lead the nation in celebrating the 10th International Yoga Day, Modi described yoga as not just knowledge but also a science.

"When people talk about yoga, most of them think it is a spiritual journey as if it is to find Allah, Ishwar or God.. Leave aside the spiritual journey which can happen any time later. For now, you can focus on personal development and yoga is part of that.

Addressing a gathering at the event, Modi said yoga has helped people realise their welfare is linked to the welfare of the world around them.

"The world is looking at yoga as a powerful agent of global good. Yoga helps us live in the present moment without the baggage of the past," he said.

"When we are peaceful within, we can also make a positive impact on the world...Yoga is making new ways of positive change in the society."

"The number of yoga followers is growing continuously. Wherever I go, there is hardly any (international) leader who does not talk to me about the benefits of yoga.

"In many countries, yoga is becoming a part of the daily lives of people," Modi said, citing the examples of Turkmenistan, Saudi Arabia, Mongolia and Germany.

In his address, he referred to 101-year-old Frenchwoman Charlotte Chopin who was awarded a Padma Shri for her services in popularising yoga in her country.

Modi said the spread of yoga globally has led to a change in perception about it as more people are travelling to India to get authentic knowledge on it.

"We are now seeing yoga tourism in states like Uttarakhand and Kerala."

"In this era of information revolution, there is a flood of information sources and it is a challenge for the human mind to focus on one subject.

"A solution for this is also in yoga as it helps the mind to focus. That is why from army to sports, yoga has been included in their routine," he said.Modi said astronauts and people working on space projects are trained in yoga as it increases "productivity as well as tolerance".

Modi also focused on the potential impact of yoga on Jammu and Kashmir.

"I have been seeing since yesterday that yoga is becoming popular with the people of Srinagar and (rest of) Jammu and Kashmir. It is a big thing that 50,000 to 60,000 people are associated with yoga. This will attract more tourists here," he said.

He said yoga could help the union territory attract more tourists, which in turn would provide new livelihood opportunities to locals.—*PTI*

Border Security Force (BSF) personnel perform yoga on International Day of Yoga in Thar Desert of Rajasthan on Friday PHOTO: PTI

Brutal heatwave: Death toll climbs to 143, actual numbers could be high

NEW DELHI, 21 JUNE

The prolonged heatwave sweeping large parts of the country has claimed more lives, with 143 recorded deaths and 41,789 people suffering from suspected heatstroke between 1 March and 20 June this year, Health ministry sources said on Friday.

However, the heatwave toll is expected to be higher than this as the data compiled under the National Heat-Related Illness and Death Surveillance by the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) does not have updated submissions from states.

Several health facilities are also yet to upload data on number of heatwave casualties.

According to the official data, on 20 June itself there have been 14 confirmed deaths due to heatstroke and nine deaths due to suspected heatstroke, taking the death toll in the March-June period to 143 from 114.

Uttar Pradesh is the worst-affected, having reported 35 deaths followed by Delhi (21) and Bihar and Rajasthan (17 each), according to the data.—*PTI*

The heatwave toll is expected to be higher than this as the data compiled under the National Heat-Related Illness and Death Surveillance PHOTO: PTI

Rain brings relief to Delhi from blazing heat

NEW DELHI, 21 JUNE

Parts of the national capital witnessed drizzling, which brought relief from the intense heatwave in the city as the minimum temperature on Friday settled at 28.4 degrees Celsius, normal for this time of the season, the weather office said.

The India Meteorological Department has predicted some relief from the searing heatwave in Delhi over the weekend as the sky is likely to remain partly cloudy on Saturday and Sunday.

The IMD has predicted thunderstorms accompanied by light rain on Friday in some parts of the city. The maximum temperature is likely to settle around 40 degrees Celsius.

Delhi has been reeling under a intense heatwave and a severe water crisis.

According to a senior police official, bodies of more than 50 people were recovered from in and around Delhi in the last five days.—*PTI*

FLOOD SITUATION REMAINS GRIM, OVER 4 L HIT

GUWAHATI, 21 JUNE

The flood situation in Assam remained grim on Friday with over four lakh people reeling under the deluge in several districts, officials said.

Several major rivers, including Kopili, Barak and Kushiyara, were flowing above the danger level as per reports till Thursday evening.

Over four lakh people in 19 districts – Bajali, Baksa, Barpeta, Biswanath, Cachar, Darrang, Goalpara, Hailakandi, Hojai, Kamrup, Karimganj, Kokrajhar, Lakhimpur, Nagaon, Nalbari, Sonitpur, South Salmara, Tamulpur and Udalguri – continued to reel under floodwater, the officials said.

The state has been receiving incessant rainfall over the past few days, leading to the deluge.

The death toll in this year's floods, landslides and storms has reached 36.

More than 100 relief camps have been opened, with over 14,000 affected people taking shelter.—*PTI*

Guj HC lifts stay on release of Aamir's son's 'Maharaj'

AHMEDABAD, 21 JUNE

The Gujarat High Court on Friday lifted the interim stay to the release of "Maharaj", debut film of Bollywood star Aamir Khan's son Junaid, observing that there is nothing derogatory in the movie and it does not target the Pushtimarg sect as alleged.

The film is based on an 1862 libel case involving a Vaishnavite religious leader and social reformer Karsandas Mulji.

Some members of the Pushtimarg sect had filed a petition against its release on Netflix, claiming that it hurts religious sentiments.

Justice Sangeeta Vishen had on 13 June given an interim stay to the release of the movie on the OTT platform.

In her order on Friday, the judge noted that the movie has been certified by Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) and it does not target the sect.—*PTI*

It is confinement if minor is kept in custody post bail: HC

MUMBAI, 21 JUNE

The Bombay High Court on Friday queried if it amounted to confinement when the juvenile accused in the Pune Porsche case was granted bail but was taken back in custody and kept in an observation home.

A division bench of Justices Bharati Dangre and Manjusha Deshpande said there was no denying that the accident was unfortunate."Two people have lost their lives. There was trauma but the child (juvenile) was also in trauma," the court said.

A division bench of Justices Bharati Dangre and Manjusha Deshpande said there was no denying that the accident was unfortunate PHOTO: PTI

The bench also questioned the police under what provision of law, the order granting bail to the minor accused in the Porsche accident case was amended and how he has been kept in "confinement".Last week, the teenager's paternal aunt filed a habeas corpus petition claiming that he was illegally detained and sought his immediate release.He is currently in observation home till 25 June.

Minor accused's father gets bail

A court in Pune on Friday granted bail to the father of the juvenile accused in one of the cases pertaining to the Porsche car crash in which two software professionals were killed last month.—*PTI*

ILLICIT ARRACK SPARKS ROW

HC slams TN as hooch death toll rises to 48

CHENNAI, 21 JUNE

Slamming the Tamil Nadu government for the Kallakurichi hooch tragedy, in which 48 people died, the Madras High Court on Friday directed it to file a detailed report on the steps taken to curb the sale of illicit arrack in the state.

A division bench comprising Justices D Krishnakumar and K Kumaresh Babu gave the directive while posting to 26 June, further hearing of a Public Interest Litigation filed by AIADMK legal wing secretary IS Inbadurai. The PIL sought a direction to the state government to transfer to CBI, the investigation into the crime/offence, sale of illicit arrack by accused people in Kallakurichi district.

The report should also contain as to the action taken into the Kallakurichi hooch tragedy, besides, the action taken pursuant to a similar incident in Villupuram's Marakanam last year, the bench added.

When the case came up for hearing, the bench orally observed this case was about the lives of the people and therefore the court wants to know as to what action was taken by the police to curb sale of illicit arrack and how many cases were filed in the state in the last one year.

The bench also said it had read a news report regarding illicit arrack being sold in Kallakurichi even before this tragedy.

Even some Youtubers had spoken about it. The National Human Rights Commission had also issued a notice in this regard to the Tamil Nadu government in May. It had called for a detailed report.—*PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Ruckus in TN Assembly over hooch tragedy; protest erupts

The second day of the Tamil Nadu Assembly Session began in Chennai on Friday with a ruckus as AIADMK legislators sporting black clothes raised slogans inside the House over the hooch tragedy in Kallakurichi. The Speaker Appavu ordered the watch and ward staff, which performs security duties inside the Assembly, to evict AIADMK MLAs from the Assembly hall. Visuals from outside the Assembly showed watch and ward staff escorting AIADMK members outside. There were heavy police personnel outside the Assembly.Chaos erupted both inside and outside the Tamil Nadu Assembly in Chennai, as AIADMK members raised slogans demanding discussion on tragedy.—*ANI*

SC REFUSES TO ENTERTAIN PLEA AGAINST MOVIE 'HAMARE BAARAH'

NEW DELHI, 21 JUNE

The Supreme Court on Friday refused to entertain a plea challenging certain alleged controversial dialogues and scenes in Annu Kapoor-starrer movie 'Hamare Baarah'.

The Bombay High Court had on 19 June allowed the release of the movie after its makers agreed to delete certain objectionable portions.The matter came up for hearing on Friday before a vacation bench of justices Vikram Nath and SVN Bhatti, which allowed the petitioner to withdraw the plea

The top court said a similar petition had come up before it last week. It said the Bombay High Court has allowed the release of the movie and the petitioner can challenge that order.A division bench of the high court had viewed the film and suggested certain changes to it which both the makers and the petitioners agreed to.

The high court had said the makers shall make the necessary changes and then release the movie.—*PTI*

ALLAHABAD HC SAYS

'Irrational arrests are violation of rights'

PRAYAGRAJ, 21 JUNE

The Allahabad High Court has held that "irrational and indiscriminate arrests" are gross violation of human rights and arrest should be the last option restricted to "exceptional cases".

Justice Siddhartha, during an anticipatory bail hearing against a man accused in a cow slaughter case, observed that arrests should only be carried out when custodial interrogation of the accused is required.

Granting anticipatory bail to Mohammad Tabish Raza, the judge said, "After considering rival submissions, this court finds that there is a case registered or about to be registered against the applicant. It cannot be definitely said when the police may apprehend him.

"After the lodging of FIR the arrest can be made by the police at will. There is no definite period fixed for the police to arrest an accused against whom a First Information Report (FIR) has been lodged," the court said in its order dated 12 June.

"The courts have repeatedly held that arrest should be the last option for the police and it should be restricted to those exceptional cases where arresting the accused is imperative or his custodial interrogation is required. Irrational and indiscriminate arrests are gross violations of human rights," it said.

A case was registered against Raza at Lanka Police Station, Varanasi district under sections of the Cow Slaughter Act and Section 11 of Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act and Section 429 the Indian Penal Code.

During court proceedings, the counsel for the Raza submitted that this was his first implication and that he has been falsely implicated in this case. He has definite apprehension that he may be arrested by the police any time, the lawyer said.

However, the government counsel opposed the prayer for anticipatory bail of the applicant on the ground that the allegations were serious.—*PTI*

Allahabad High Court said that arrests should only be carried out when custodial interrogation of the accused is required PHOTO: PTI

- A case was registered against Raza at Lanka Police Station, Varanasi district under sections of the Cow Slaughter Act and Section 11 of Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act

SC grants 2 weeks interim bail to Mahesh in Elgar case

NEW DELHI, 21 JUNE

The Supreme Court on Friday granted interim bail for two weeks to activist Mahesh Raut, an accused in the Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case, for attending the rituals following the death of his grandmother.

A vacation bench of justices Vikram Nath and SVN Bhatti directed that the interim bail will commence from 26 June and Raut shall surrender without fail on 10 July.

The bench passed the order on his application seeking interim bail to attend the rituals which are likely to be held on 29-30 June and 5-6 July.

"Considering the facts and circumstances of the case and the period of incarceration already undergone by the respondent and also the nature of request made for the purpose, we are inclined to grant two weeks interim bail to the applicant (Raut) which may commence from 26 June, 2024 and end on 10 July, 2024," the bench said.

It said the terms and conditions of the release shall be determined by the special court and the National Investigation Agency (NIA) would be at liberty to request the trial court to impose such stringent conditions as may be necessary.

"The applicant, on being released on 26 June, shall surrender without fail on 10 July, 2024, that is, on completion of two weeks," it said.

The top court had in September last year extended the stay granted by the Bombay High Court on the implementation of its verdict granting bail to Raut.—*PTI*

PHOTO:X

YOGA DAY 2024 IN US

People perform yoga during a programme organised to celebrate the 10th International Day of Yoga, at Times Square, in New York, USA
PHOTO: PTI

Beijing holds sway over Russia- North Korea pact

China appears to be keeping its distance as Russia and North Korea move closer to each other with a new defense pact that could tilt the balance of power among the three authoritarian states.

Experts say China's leaders are likely fretting over potential loss of influence over North Korea after North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and Russian President Vladimir Putin signed the deal this week, and how that could increase instability on the Korean Peninsula.

But Beijing may be struggling to come up with a response to because of its conflicting goals: keeping peace in the Koreas while countering the US and its Western allies on the global stage.

Beijing so far has not commented on the deal — which requires both countries to provide defense assistance if the other is attacked — and only reiterated boilerplate statements that it seeks to uphold peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and advance a political settlement of the North-South divide.

The Chinese response has been "very weak," said Victor Cha, senior vice president for Asia and Korea chair at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, adding that it could be a sign that Beijing doesn't yet know what to do.

Some in Beijing may welcome the Russia-North Korea partnership as a way of pushing back at America's dominance in world affairs, but Cha said that "there is also a great deal of discomfort" in China, which doesn't want to lose its sway over its neighbour to Russia, doesn't want to see a destabilising nuclear power on its doorstep, and doesn't want to bring the conflict in Europe to Asia.

But China isn't raising these concerns publicly. "They don't want to push Kim Jong Un further into the arms of Vladimir Putin," Cha said, referring to the leaders of the two countries.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, left, and North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un shake hands in Pyongyang, North Korea
PHOTO: PTI

Lin Jian, a spokesperson for the Chinese Foreign Ministry, declined to comment on the new agreement. "The cooperation between Russia and the DPRK is a matter between two sovereign states.

We do not have information on the relevant matter," he said, referring to North Korea by the initials for its official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

John Kirby, the White House national security spokesman, told reporters that the pact between Russia and North Korea "should be of concern to any country that believes that the UN Security Council resolutions ought to be abided by."

The Security Council has imposed sanctions on North Korea to try to stop its development of nuclear weapons.

Kirby also said the agreement "should be of concern to anybody who thinks that supporting the people of Ukraine is an important thing to do. And we would think that that concern would be shared by the People's Republic of China."

One area that China could be concerned about is whether Russia will help North Korea's weapons program by sharing advanced technology, said Alexander Gabuev, director of the Carnegie Russia Eurasia Centre.

The meeting between Putin and Kim this week was the latest chapter in decades of complicated political and military relationships in East Asia, where the Chinese Communist Party, once an underdog, has emerged as a leading power that wields influence over both North Korea and Russia.

That and other developments have raised alarms in the US that Beijing, now the world's second-largest economy, could challenge the US-led world order by aligning itself with countries such as Russia, North Korea and Iran. Beijing has rejected that allegation.

Sun Yun, director of the China program at the Stimson Centre, said Beijing doesn't want to form a three-way alliance with North Korea and Russia, because it "needs to keep its options open."

Such a coalition could mean a new Cold War, something Beijing says it is determined to avoid, and locking itself to Pyongyang and Moscow would be contrary to China's goals of maintaining relationships with Europe and improving ties with Japan and South Korea, she said.

Sun added that the rapprochement between North Korea and Moscow "opens up possibilities and potentials of uncertainty, but based on what has happened so far, I don't think that China's national interests have been undercut by this."

Closer ties between Putin and Kim could weaken Beijing's sway and leave it as the "biggest loser," said Danny Russel, who was the top US diplomat for Asia in the Obama administration.

Russel, now vice president for international security and diplomacy at the Asia Society Policy Institute, said that Kim is eager to reduce his country's dependence on China.

"The dilution of Chinese leverage means Kim Jong Un can disregard Beijing's calls for restraint," he said, "and that is much more likely to create chaos at a time when (Chinese leader) Xi Jinping desperately wants stability."

—*PTI*

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

SALAR ساڵار

IISc team fabricates device to make infrared light visible

The human eye can only see light at certain frequencies (called the visible spectrum), lowest of which constitutes red light.

Infrared light, which we can't see, has an even lower frequency than red light. Researchers at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) have now fabricated a device to increase or "up-convert" the frequency of short infrared light to the visible range.

Up-conversion of light has diverse applications, especially in defence and optical communications, Bengaluru-based IISc noted in a press release.

In a first, the IISc team used a 2D material to design what they call a non-linear optical mirror stack to achieve this up-conversion, combined with widefield imaging capability, it said.

Infrared imaging

The stack consists of multi-layered gallium selenide fixed to the top of a gold reflective surface, with a silicon dioxide layer sandwiched in between.

Traditional infrared imaging uses exotic low-energy bandgap semiconductors or micro-bolometer arrays, which usually pick up heat or absorption signatures from object being studied.

Infrared imaging and sensing is useful in diverse areas, from astronomy to chemistry. For example, when infrared light is passed through a gas, sensing how the light changes can help scientists tease out specific properties of the gas. Such sensing is not always possible using visible light.

However, existing infrared sensors are bulky and not very efficient. They are also export-restricted because of their utility in defence. There is, therefore, a critical need to develop indigenous and efficient devices, according to IISc.

IISc method

The method used by the IISc team involves feeding an input infrared signal along with a pump beam onto the mirror stack. The nonlinear optical properties of the material constituting the stack result in a mixing of the frequencies, leading to an output beam of increased (up-converted) frequency, but with the rest of properties intact.

Using this method, the release said, they were able to up-convert infrared light of wavelength around 1550 nm to 622 nm visible light. The output light wave can be detected using traditional silicon-based cameras.

"This process is coherent – the properties of the input beam are preserved at the output. This means that if one imprints a particular pattern in the input infrared frequency, it automatically gets transferred to the new output frequency," explains Varun Raghunathan, Associate Professor in the Department of Electrical Communication Engineering (ECE) and corresponding author of the study published in 'Laser & Photonics Reviews.'

The advantage of using gallium selenide, he adds, is its high optical nonlinearity, which means that a single photon of infrared light and a single photon of the pump beam could combine to give a single photon of light with up-converted frequency.

The team was able to achieve the up-conversion even with a thin layer of gallium selenide measuring just 45 nm. The small size makes it more cost-effective than traditional devices that use centimetre-sized crystals. Its performance was also found to be comparable to current state-of-the-art up-conversion imaging systems, the release said.

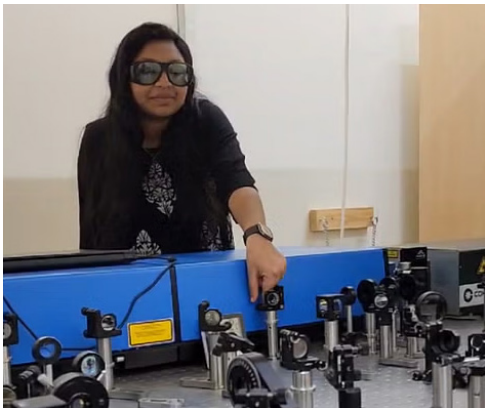
Particle swarm optimisation algorithm

Jyothsna K Manattayil, PhD student at ECE and first author, explains that they used a particle swarm optimisation algorithm to speed up the calculation of the right thickness of layers needed. Depending on the thickness, the wavelengths that can pass through gallium selenide and get up-converted will vary. This means that the material thickness needs to be tweaked depending on the application.

"In our experiments, we have used infrared light of 1550 nm and a pump beam of 1040 nm. But that doesn't mean that it won't work for other wavelengths," she says. "We saw that the performance didn't drop for a wide range of infrared wavelengths."

Going forward, the researchers plan to extend their work to up-convert light of longer wavelengths. They are also trying to improve the efficiency of the device by exploring other stack geometries.

—*PTI*



Lead author Jyothsna KM aligning optical beams for up-conversion experiments
PHOTO: IISC

What's happening inside India's first heat stroke emergency room?

In one of the largest hospitals in India's capital, Delhi, a physician says he has never seen anything like this before.

"This is an unprecedented heatwave. In my 13 years of working here, I don't remember signing a death certificate for heat stroke. This year, I've signed several," says Ajay Chauhan of the Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital (RMLH).

Delhi has been reeling under a prolonged heatwave, with daily temperatures crossing 40C (104F) since May, peaking at nearly 50C. Humidity and hot winds exacerbate the heat, compounded by water shortages and power outages due to soaring demand. And people are dying from the heat, with media reports suggesting at least 20 fatalities due to heat-related illnesses.

A heat stroke, the most severe heat illness, is identified by three key signs: exposure to high heat and humidity, a core body temperature of 40.5C (105F) or higher, and mental changes like mild confusion or impaired consciousness. Heat stroke is also a silent killer, and victims can begin to fall ill hours after exposure to sun. India's National Centre for Disease Control calls heat strokes a "life-threatening" condition with a mortality rate of 40-64 per cent.

Since Chauhan's hospital in Delhi opened a heat stroke clinic in late May, seven people have died of heat stroke and more than 40 have been treated for heat-related ailments.

The majority were men working outdoors and in small, unregulated factories with poor conditions, enduring extreme heat exposure. To be sure, the heatwave is not restricted to Delhi: dozens have died from heat-related illnesses since March, with more than 50 deaths in just three days in early June in the states of Uttar Pradesh and Odisha.

At the RMLH clinic, possibly the first of its kind in India, the effort to save heat stroke patients underscores the challenge posed by rapid climate and health emergencies.

A few days ago, a man was wheeled in with body temperatures soaring to 42C (107.7F). A body's normal core temperature is 37-38C. He was suffering from a heat stroke.

At this temperature, a human body begins to shut down, cells deteriorate, and there's a risk of organ failure. Sweating ceases as blood flow to the skin stops, leaving it cold and clammy.

At the clinic, doctors dunked the patient into the icy waters of a 250-litre ceramic tub where the temperature ranges from 0 to 5C. (The clinic is equipped with two ceramic tubs, a 200kg ice-making machine, rectal thermometers, ice boxes and inflatable tubs.) The patient took about 25 minutes to cool down and begin recovering before he was moved to the ward for further treatment.

A patient admitted due to heat stroke and exhaustion undergoes treatment due to prevailing heatwave conditions, hospitals in Delhi-NCR are seeing an influx of patients with complaints of heat stroke ***PHOTO: PTI***

It is not difficult to fall ill in Delhi. Life is tough. A third of residents live in substandard and congested housing. The city's 6,400-odd slums, home to more than a million households, lack adequate cooling and face seasonal livelihood crises. Men fall ill working outdoors; women fall sick after spending extended periods in kitchen settings with traditional stoves.

Green spaces are scarce. In the peak of summer, the city turns into a scorching furnace, trapped between the blazing heat from above and the searing ground below.

Anjana Kumari, the wife of a daily wage worker admitted at RHML with heat stroke, told The Indian Express that their slum hutment's only fan wasn't working due to a power cut. Her husband, exhausted from working all day on Monday, couldn't sleep and later suffered seizures, vomiting, and diarrhoea. She rushed him to the hospital at night. "Doctors have told me he won't be able to walk for some time and need a lot of care," Kumari said.

Those who work outdoors suffer the most. A large majority of respondents in a new Greenpeace survey on how heat impacts street vendors in Delhi reported health issues due to hot weather. Irritability was the most common (73.44 per cent), followed by headaches, dehydration, sunburn, fatigue and muscle cramps. Most faced challenges accessing medical care due to lack of money. "The heat increases every day. We are living under the open sky. What resources can I gather? If possible, there should be some trees and plants nearby, so that fresh air keeps blowing and the body gets some relief," Guddi, a sugarcane juice vendor who operates a manual crusher, told Greenpeace.

And all over India, people are falling sick due to the heat. A new nationwide survey by Centre for Rapid Insights (CRI) offers some startling insights into how heatwaves hurt people and cripple productivity.

It showed that 45 per cent of the households contacted reported at least one member getting sick from the heat last month.

Some three-fourths of India's workers work in heat-exposed jobs like construction and mining. This becomes worse during heatwaves as there are fewer safe and productive work hours during the day. A Lancet study reported a loss of 167.2 billion potential labour hours in India due to excessive heat in 2021.

Heatwaves killed more than 25,000 people between 1992 and 2019, according to official figures. As India doesn't compile mortality data properly, experts reckon the actual toll would be much higher.

India's heat action plans are also not working well, as a study found. Tellingly, 68% of the vendors in Delhi have heard about heatwaves, according to the Greenpeace study. Yet the heat emergency doesn't figure in the political discourse.

Things look dire in Delhi. In 2022, India saw 203 heatwave days, the highest on record, with Delhi experiencing around 17 of them. March marked India's hottest month recorded by the the weather department, while Delhi had its second-hottest April in 72 years.

—*BBC News*

Putin warns S Korea against arming Kyiv

Meanwhile, South Korea summons Russian envoy to protest country's pact with N Korea

MOSCOW, 21 JUNE

Vladimir Putin has warned South Korea it would be making "a big mistake" if it arms Ukraine in the war against Russia.

His comments come after Seoul said it was considering such a possibility, in response to Russia and North Korea's new pact to help each other in the event of "aggression" against either country.

Moscow "will... [make] decisions which are unlikely to please the current leadership of South Korea" if Seoul decides to supply arms to Kyiv, Putin said.

The Russian leader was speaking in Vietnam, shortly after a lavish visit to Pyongyang where he signed a mutual defence agreement with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

Putin also warned that Moscow is willing to arm Pyongyang if US and its allies continue supplying Ukraine with weapons.

Seoul had earlier condemned the Russian-North Korean agreement as a threat to its national security, and national security adviser Chang Ho-jin had said his country planned to "reconsider" the issue of arms support to Ukraine".

Following Putin's remarks, South Korea's Presidential office said on Friday it would consider "various options" in supplying arms to Ukraine and its stance will "depend on how Russia approaches this issue".

It also summoned the Russian ambassador Georgy Zinoviev to protest the pact, demanding that Moscow "immediately ceases" military cooperation with Pyongyang.

While South Korea has given humanitarian aid and military equipment to Ukraine, it has so far refused to provide lethal weapons as it has an official policy not to arm countries at war.

Some in Ukraine have been hoping that the deepening military collaboration between Moscow and Pyongyang would cause Seoul to rethink its approach. Analysts had earlier said that Kyiv would use Putin's visit to Pyongyang to up the pressure.

During the visit, Kim had also pledged "full support" for Russia's invasion of Ukraine.
—*BBC News*

Vietnamese President To Lam, greets his Russia President Vladimir Putin at the Presidential Palace in Hanoi, Vietnam **PHOTO: PTI**

> While South Korea has given humanitarian aid and military equipment to Ukraine, it has so far refused to provide lethal weapons as it has an official policy not to arm countries at war. Putin warned that Moscow is willing to arm Pyongyang

RUSSIA FIRES JAILED DEPUTY DEFENCE MINISTER

MOSCOW, 21 JUNE

Russian authorities have formally dismissed a deputy defence minister jailed on bribery charges and accused by Kremlin critics of living a lavish lifestyle, Russian media reported Thursday. A court ordered that his pre-trial detention be extended for three more months.

Timur Ivanov, 48, is one of several senior military officers arrested on corruption charges in recent months. He was a close associate of Sergei Shoigu, whom President Vladimir Putin replaced as defence minister last month.

Ivanov, arrested in April, was charged with taking an especially large bribe. His lawyers said he maintains his innocence. The Basmanny District Court in Moscow on Thursday extended his detention pending investigation and trial until at least September 23. If convicted, he faces up to 15 years in prison.

Ivanov's lawyer Denis Baluyev confirmed the dismissal in comments to Russian business news site RBK. It wasn't immediately clear from the reports when exactly Ivanov was fired. —*AP*

Ukraine can hit inside Russia 'anywhere': US

WASHINGTON, 21 JUNE

In a shift in stance, the United States has told Ukraine that it can use American-supplied weapons to hit Russian forces "anywhere", its forces attack from across the border, and not just the region near Kharkiv, Politico reported, citing US officials.

This subtle shift, which according to the officials is not a change in policy, comes weeks after the US quietly signaled the green light to Kyiv to strike inside Russia in retaliation to a cross-border assault on the city of Kharkiv.

During that time, the US officials stressed that the policy was limited to the Kharkiv region, among other restrictions.

Since then, the Ukrainian forces have used American weapons to strike into Russia at least once, destroying targets in the city of Belgorod, and managing to hold back the Russian assault.

On the other hand, Ukraine and other European officials have asked the US to loosen its restrictions, allowing Ukraine to strike anywhere inside Russia.

Recently, Russia has indicated that it might soon move to the northeastern city of Sumy, which is also near the Russian border. In that case, the policy would apply there as well, Sullivan added. —*ANI*

Ukraine and other European officials have asked the US to loosen its restrictions **PHOTO: ANI**

Japan's space agency hit by cyberattacks

TOKYO, 21 JUNE

Japan's space agency has suffered a series of cyberattacks since last year, but sensitive information related to rockets and satellites was not affected and it is continuing to investigate and take preventive measures, officials said Friday. Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi acknowledged that the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency, or JAXA, has had "a number of" cyberattacks since late last year. JAXA has investigated the extent of illegal access while shutting down the affected networks and verifying that they did not contain classified information about operations of rockets and satellites and national security, he said. Hayashi vowed to strengthen Japan's ability to counter cyberattacks. —*AP*

PHOTO: GLOBAL.JAXA.JP

Trump promises Green Card for foreign graduates

WASHINGTON, 21 JUNE

Softening his stance on immigration, former US president Donald Trump has promised to give automatic green cards to foreign students who graduate from US colleges to prevent them from returning to their home countries like India and China where they become multibillionaires. Trump's departure from the anti-immigrant rhetoric comes ahead of the November presidential election in which immigration and deportation of illegal immigrants are among the key issues for voters. Trump, however, always supported a merit-based legal immigration system. A Green Card, known officially as a permanent resident card, is an identity document showing a person has permanent residency in the United States. —*PTI*

Dali crew to leave after months on ship in Baltimore

BALTIMORE, 21 JUNE

Crew members on the cargo ship Dali can head home under an agreement that allows lawyers to question them as part of investigations into the cause of the deadly collapse of Baltimore's Francis Scott Key Bridge. Attorneys had asked the judge Tuesday to prevent the roughly two dozen total crew members - all hailing from India or Sri Lanka - from leaving. Eight of the Dali's crew members were scheduled to return home. None of the crew members has been able to leave the US since their ship lost power and crashed into one of the bridge's supporting columns on 26 March. Six construction workers were killed and most maritime traffic through Baltimore's busy port was temporarily halted. —*PTI*

15 shot during Juneteenth celebration

HONOLULU, 21 JUNE

Fifteen people were shot during a Juneteenth celebration in Oakland, California, police said. The violence broke out Wednesday night during an event at Lake Merritt that was largely peaceful, with as many as 5,000 in attendance, until a sideshow involving "motorbikes and vehicles" took place around 8.15 pm on the north side of the lake. A fight broke out down the street from the sideshow and a crowd gathered in the area of the fight, police said. At least one person was taken into custody for assaulting an officer. No suspects have been taken into custody in connection with the shooting, police said. At least one gunshot victim was in critical condition. The victims' ages ranged from 20 to 30 years old. Police announced the injuries during a news conference on Thursday. —*AP*

Kaspersky boasts one of the world's most popular consumer antivirus products **PHOTO: X/@KASPERSKY**

Cyber firm Kaspersky denies it's a hazard after US bans it

WASHINGTON, 21 JUNE

The cybersecurity firm Kaspersky denied on Friday that it is a security threat after the US Commerce Department banned the use of its software in the United States.

The Moscow-based company — whose CEO Eugene Kaspersky is Russian — said in a statement that the Commerce Department's decision would not affect its ability to sell and promote its cyber security products and training in the US.

Kaspersky said the government had based its decision on the "geopolitical climate and theoretical concerns" rather than independently verifying if there was a risk.

The government says Kaspersky's Russian connections mean the company poses an "undue or unacceptable risk to US national security or the safety and security."

The company conducts much of its business in Russia and, as a Russian citizen who lives in that country, Eugene Kaspersky himself is subject to Russian law, the Commerce Department said in a decision dated June 14 that was posted on the Federal Register.

The department said it had considered Kaspersky's objections to the initial findings of its investigation into whether its products or services posed a threat and found that the decision to ban its software was "well supported."

Aside from the company's obligation to abide by Russian laws and decisions, its software can be exploited to identify sensitive US citizens' data and make it available to Russian government actors, the department said.

Kaspersky boasts one of the world's most popular consumer antivirus products and a research unit widely respected for routinely exposing elite hacking groups. —*AP*

STUDENT TELLS POPE TO NOT USE ANTI-LGBTQ WORDS

VENICE, 21 JUNE

Pope Francis has been told by a Filipino Catholic university student to "stop using offensive language" against LGBTQ people.

Slurs cause "immense pain", Jack Lorenz Acebedo Rivero said during an online video panel with other Catholic university students and the pope.

His comments come after reports that the Pope used extremely offensive language against gay men during a closed-door meeting last month with bishops.

He later apologised to those who were "hurt" and the Vatican said he did not mean to offend anyone.

The Pope reportedly said gay men should not be allowed to train for the priesthood, adding there was already an air of frociaggine, which translates as a highly offensive slur.

He recently created consternation among Catholic traditionalists by saying priests should be able to bless same-sex couples in some circumstances and has frequently talked of gay people being welcome in the Church.
—*BBC News*

N Korea build walls along border, Sat images reveal

PYONGYANG, 21 JUNE

North Korea is building sections of what appears to be a wall in several places near its border with South Korea, new satellite images reveal.

Images analysed by BBC Verify also show that land inside the Demilitarised Zone (DMZ) has been cleared, which experts say could be a violation of the long-standing truce with South Korea. The DMZ is a 4km (2.5 miles) wide buffer zone between North and South Korea, who are still technically at war having never signed a peace treaty. The DMZ is split in two, with each side controlled by the respective nations. This recent activity is "unusual", according to experts, and comes at a time of rising tensions between the two countries.

"At this point we can only speculate that North Korea is looking to strengthen its military presence and fortifications along the border," says Shreyas Reddy, a correspondent at the specialist site NK News, based in Seoul.

The images appear to show at least three sections where barriers have been erected near the DMZ.

S Korean activists say they flew anti-North Korean propaganda leaflets

A South Korea activists' group said Friday it again flew large balloons carrying anti-North Korean propaganda leaflets toward North Korea, adding to a campaign that aggravated animosities between the rivals and prompted a resumption of Cold War-style psychological warfare along their border.

The South Korean civilian group, led by North Korean defector Park Sang-hak, said it floated 20 balloons attached with 3,00,000 propaganda leaflets, 5,000 USB sticks with South Korean pop songs and TV dramas, and 3,000 US dollar bills from the South Korean border town of Paju on Thursday night.

South Korea's military said that it had fired warnings shots the previous day to repel North Korean soldiers who temporarily crossed the rivals' land border for the third time this month. —*BBC News/AP*

This recent activity comes at a time of rising tensions between North Korea and South Korea **PHOTO: BBC**

Sikh activists on Canada's no-fly list lose appeal

OTTAWA, 21 JUNE

A Canadian court has thrown out a bid by two Sikh extremists to get off the country's no-fly list, saying there are "reasonable grounds" to suspect they will threaten transportation security or travel by air to commit a terrorism offence.

The Federal Court of Appeal in its ruling this week dismissed an appeal by Bhagat Singh Brar and Parmjeet Singh Dulai after they lost a constitutional challenge of their no-fly designations under Canada's Secure Air Travel Act, The Canadian Press news agency reported from Vancouver on Thursday.

The two were not allowed to board planes in Vancouver in 2018.

The ruling says the act empowers the public safety minister to ban people from flying if there are "reasonable grounds to suspect they will threaten transportation security or travel by air to commit a terrorism offence."

"At some point, the appellants tried to fly. They could not," the ruling says. "They were on the list and the minister had directed that they not fly."

The appellate panel found that based on confidential security information, the minister "had reasonable grounds to suspect that the appellants would travel by air to commit a terrorism offence." —*AP*

The two activists were not allowed to board planes in 2018 **PHOTO: PTI**

Taiwan to protest over controversial law

TAIPEI, 21 JUNE

Tens of thousands of supporters of Taiwan's ruling party are expected to gather outside parliament on Friday after it pushed ahead with a hugely controversial "contempt of parliament" bill.

The Opposition Kuomintang party (KMT) says the new law is badly needed to redress the power imbalance between the legislature and Taiwan's very powerful presidency.

But the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) says it's an unconstitutional power grab, aimed at taking revenge on the DPP government led by President William Lai Ching-te.

The bill will give Taiwan's parliament more power to interrogate and investigate the executive – to subpoena government officials and private individuals, which could force them to hand over sensitive documents to lawmakers.

It also introduces a "contempt of legislature" clause which can impose fines and even a prison term of up to one year for officials who disrespect parliament. The last clause has been heavily criticised by legal scholars, who say it goes far beyond what is normal in other democratic countries.

When the bill was first introduced in May, huge protests sprang to life on the streets of Taipei as tens of thousands surrounded parliament for days. But there was a lull when it went to Mr Lai's office for approval. —*BBC News*

> The Opposition party says the new law is badly needed to redress the power imbalance between the legislature and Taiwan's very powerful presidency

Hawaii settles climate change lawsuit

HONOLULU, 21 JUNE

Hawaii's governor and lawyers for youth plaintiffs announced that they settled a lawsuit alleging Hawaii violated the state constitution by operating a transportation system that harmed the climate and infringed upon the children's right to a clean and healthy environment.

The parties said the settlement was the first between a state government and youth plaintiffs. —*AP*

ARM SEVERED

Indian man 'left to die on road' in Italy

LONDON/ROME, 21 JUNE

A 31-year-old Indian casual worker in Italy has died tragically after he was dumped on the road without medical assistance by his employer after his arm was severed by heavy farm machinery.

Satnam Singh was injured by heavy machinery while working in a vegetable field in Lazio, near Rome, on Monday.

The Embassy of India in Rome posted on Wednesday on X that it was aware of the very unfortunate demise of an Indian national in Latina, Italy. "We are in contact with local authorities. Efforts are underway to contact the family and provide consular assistance," it wrote without giving more information. Singh reportedly hailed from Punjab.

According to Italian media, Singh's employer, Antonello Lovato, loaded him and his wife into a van and left them by the side of the road near their home.

"We heard his wife's screams who kept calling for help, then we saw a lad who was holding him in his arms and who carried him into the house," ANSA news agency quoted Ilario Pepe, the owner of the house, as saying.

"I ran after him," said Pepe, "and I saw him get into a van and I asked him what had happened and why he hadn't taken him to hospital. The severed arm was placed in a fruit box. Medical help did not reach Singh until an hour and a half later. He was airlifted to a hospital in Rome but died on Wednesday. Lovato is now under investigation for criminal negligence and manslaughter.

Lovato's father told Italian media: "My son had told [Singh] not to go near the machinery, but he didn't listen." Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni called Singh's death an "inhuman act" and a "barbarism" that must be "harshly punished". Italy's Minister of Labour, Marina Calderone, said the death of Singh had been an "act of barbarity".

Opposition 5-Star Movement (M5S) leader Giuseppe Conte on Thursday urged Meloni to act to stamp out brutal gangmastering. —*PTI*

The deceased, Satnam Singh was injured by heavy machinery while working in a vegetable field in Lazio on Monday **PHOTO: SCREENGRAB**

Markets halt record breaking rally; Sensex falls 269 points

Nifty rose 100.1 points to record of 23,667.10

MUMBAI, 21 JUNE

Halting their record-breaking rally, equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty buckled under selling pressure as investors pared exposure to oil & gas, capital goods and FMCG stocks amid a bearish trend in global markets.

Snapping its six-day rally, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined 269.03 points or 0.35 per cent to settle at 77,209.90. During the day, it tanked 676.93 points or 0.87 per cent to 76,802.

The Nifty rose 100.1 points to hit a record intraday peak of 23,667.10 earlier in the day. However, it failed to maintain the momentum and slipped 65.90 points or 0.28 per cent to end at 23,501.10.

Among the 30 Sensex companies, UltraTech Cement, Larsen & Toubro, Tata Motors, Nestle, Tata Steel, Hindustan Unilever, Bajaj Finance, Reliance Industries, Mahindra

Airtel, JSW Steel, Tata, Wipro & NTPC were among gainers **PHOTO: ANI**

& Mahindra and State Bank of India were the biggest laggards.

In contrast, Bharti Airtel, Infosys, JSW Steel, Tata Consultancy Services, Wipro and NTPC were among the biggest gainers.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 415.30 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.16 per cent to USD 85.57 a barrel. —*PTI*

PRE-BUDGET MEETING

Farmer bodies seek higher investment in agri research

NEW DELHI, 21 JUNE

In a pre-budget consultation with Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, farm organisations and experts on Friday pitched for higher investment in agricultural research, rationalisation of fertiliser subsidies and infrastructure development to boost the sector's resilience against climate change.

The two-and-a-half-hour meeting saw stakeholders advocating for a significant hike in the budget allocation for the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) from Rs 9,500 crore to Rs 20,000 crore.

Indian Chamber of Food and Agriculture (ICFA) Chairman MJ Khan emphasised the need for "massive investment in agriculture R&D" to drive sector growth and increase farmers' income.

Experts also called for consolidating all agriculture-related subsidies for transfer through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) and increasing the retail price of urea, which has remained

The Centre is set to present its annual Budget in July **PHOTO: PIXABAY**

- The two-and-a-half-hour meeting saw stakeholders advocating for a significant hike in the budget allocation for ICAR to Rs 20,000 crore

unchanged since 2018. The promotion of bio-fertilisers and foliar fertilisers through subsidies was another key demand.

Other notable suggestions included disbanding the MSP committee, and commissioning a new agricultural policy for India and changing the funding ratio for human resource development in centrally sponsored schemes from 60:40 to 90:10, with the central government bearing 90 per cent of the cost for five years. Experts also suggested increasing the budget allocation for APEDA from Rs 80 crore to Rs 800 crore to boost farm exports, creating district export hubs and launching a National Goat and Sheep Mission.

Modi government is set to present its annual Budget for 2024-25 next month. —*PTI*

Retailers seek lower taxes, more benefits

NEW DELHI, 21 JUNE

The Retailers Association of India (RAI) on Friday called for lower taxes for individuals to generate demand and spur consumption besides seeking low-cost finance, subsidies and benefits on land rates and necessities such as electricity for retailers ahead of Union Budget FY25.

Retailing in India accounts for about 10 per cent of the country's GDP and the sector is second only to agriculture in terms of the number of people directly employed, RAI said in its pre-Budget memorandum highlighting areas that need attention in order to make the industry stronger.

It will boost the overall consumer sentiment and benefit the retail sector, it said adding, consumption equals to development and the "tax benefits and relief to individual taxpayers will increase monthly disposable income and support consumption". —*PTI*

Rupee recovers to settle 6P at 83.55 against dollar

MUMBAI, 21 JUNE

The rupee recovered from over two months low level and settled 6 paise higher at 83.55 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday, backed by sustained inflow of foreign capital and softening crude oil prices overseas. At the interbank foreign exchange, the local unit opened at 83.60 and touched the intra-day high of 83.49 against the greenback. The currency hit the session's lowest level of 83.63 but finally settled at 83.55 against the dollar, registering a gain of 6 paise from its previous close. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading higher 0.13 per cent at 105.36. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net buyers in capital markets on Thursday. —*PTI*

Gold surges ₹ 800; silver rallies ₹ 1,400

NEW DELHI, 21 JUNE

Gold prices surged Rs 800 to Rs 73,350 per 10 grams in the national capital on Friday amid a rally in precious metal rates in the international markets, according to HDFC Securities. In the previous session, the yellow metal had closed at Rs 72,550 per 10 grams. Extending gains for the fourth straight day, silver prices also rallied by Rs 1,400 to Rs 93,700 per kg. In the global markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,360 per ounce, up USD 28 from the previous close. Gold climbed on Friday, boosted by weaker-than-expected US macro data, which raised the possibility that the US Federal Reserve will cut interest rates at least twice in 2024. Silver was also quoted higher at USD 30.40 per ounce. It had settled at USD 30.15. —*PTI*

India's forex reserves drop to $652.895 billion

MUMBAI, 21 JUNE

India's forex reserves dropped by USD 2.922 billion to USD 652.895 billion for the week ended 14 June, the Reserve Bank said on Friday. In the previous reporting week, the kitty had jumped by USD 4.307 billion to USD 655.817 billion, a new all-time high after consecutive weeks of increase in the reserves.

For the week ended June 14, foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, decreased by USD 2.097 billion to USD 574.24 billion, the data released on Friday showed. Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves. . —*PTI*

Zepto valued at USD 3.6 bn in latest fund raise; eyes IPO

NEW DELHI, 21 JUNE

Quick commerce company Zepto on Friday said it has raised USD 665 million (about Rs 5,560 crore) in the latest funding round that valued the firm at USD 3.6 billion, almost triple than its worth a year back.

The massive fundraise comes less than a year after the Mumbai-based startup raised USD 235 million at a valuation of USD 1.4 billion.

The funding round saw participation from new investors like Avenir, Lightspeed, and Avra, alongside existing investors Glade Brook, Nexus, and StepStone, Goodwater, and Lachy Groom.

"We've gone from 0 to 1 billion-plus in sales, or GMV, in 29 months, that is faster than any other internet company before us... Even on a base of over a billion dollars at this point, we are growing 100 per cent-plus year on year. And that for us is one of the big drivers of this fundraise," Zepto co-founder and CEO Aadit Palicha told PTI.

Attributing the growth to the performance of the quick commerce firm, the young entrepreneur said, "This is largely because of the input excellence we've built across the supply chain.

Nearly 75 per cent of the company's stores are fully EBITDA positive as of May 2024, he said.

Zepto co-founder and CTO Kaivalya Vohra said the firm plans to hire top talent across engineering, product, growth, finance, operations, and category management. —*PTI*

75% of the company's stores are fully EBITDA positive **PHOTO: IANS**

'Ulips can't be promoted as pure investment tool'

NEW DELHI, 21 JUNE

Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has issued a master circular barring the promotion of Unit Linked Insurance Plans (ULIPs) as 'investment products'.

Unit-linked or index-linked insurance products shall not be advertised as 'investment products', IRDAI said in a master circular dated 19 June.

Insurers will have to specifically state that market-linked insurance plans are different from traditional endowment policies and carry risks. Likewise, participating (with bonus) endowment policies will have to state upfront that the bonuses projected.

All the advertisements of linked insurance products and annuity products with variable annuity payout option shall disclose the risk factors,.

Besides, advertisements for all linked and annuity products with variable payouts must comply with the standards set by the Advertising Standards Council of India, it added. —*PTI*

Jensen Huang, chief executive of Nvidia, threw a ceremonial pitch prior to an Oakland Athletics baseball game in May **PHOTO: BBC**

Microsoft back as most valuable firm; Nvidia slips

REDMOND, 21 JUNE

Nvidia has handed back the position as the world's most valuable company to Microsoft after its share price fell by more than 3.5 per cent on Thursday.

The artificial intelligence (AI) chip giant briefly held the top spot from Tuesday, with a stock market valuation of $3.34tn (£2.64tn).

But Nvidia's shares fell to $130.78 on Thursday, sending its value down to around $3.22tn, with Microsoft reclaiming the title as it held steady at more than $3.3tn.

Nvidia's rise has been fuelled by its dominance of what analysts call the "new gold or oil in the tech sector" - the chips that power AI.

Nvidia, Microsoft and Apple - each worth more than $3tn - are in a three-horse race to be the world's most valuable company. While Nvidia reached the top spot for just a brief period, some analysts have predicted competition between the three technology firms will remain fierce.

"We believe over the next year the race to $4 trillion market cap in tech will be front and centre between Nvidia, Apple, and Microsoft," Wedbush Securities said earlier this week. Nvidia's stock has boomed due to growing demand for chips that train and run generative AI models, such as OpenAI's ChatGPT. —*BBC News*

Global tea association faces supply-demand mismatch

KOLKATA, 21 JUNE

Associations of tea producers in Asia and Africa have flagged concerns over the global mismatch of demand and supply and called for an early restoration of equilibrium, according to a statement issued by a planters' body on Friday.

In a meeting of the stakeholders of the global tea industry, recently held in Dubai, the associations also addressed the issue of quality and long-term sustainability of the sector.

Indian Tea Association (ITA) chairman Hemant Bangur said that the global tea industry is facing a demand-supply mismatch as production continues to outpace demand.

Representatives of ITA, East African Trade Association (EATTA), independent tea producers' body of Kenya, and tea associations of Malawi, Bangladesh and Uganda attended the meeting.

They voiced concern over stagnating consumption demand in Europe and Asia, the ITA said in a statement.

Bangur said, "Africa with its growing population and rising income has the potential to become one of the largest markets for black tea."

According to the ITA statement, EATTA chairman Arthur Sewe said the tea sector in East Africa is currently facing a decline in quality and issues related to climate change, which require concerted efforts by all the stakeholders.

The stakeholders also felt that the economic recession and geopolitical challenges due to the Russia-Ukraine conflict in the traditional bulk tea export markets had affected shipments. —*PTI*

They voiced concern over demand in Europe and Asia **PHOTO: PIXABAY**

Retail inflations for farm, rural workers remain flat

NEW DELHI, 21 JUNE

Retail inflation for agricultural labourers and rural workers remained almost flat at 7 per cent and 7.02 per cent, respectively, in May as against the two comparative figures of 7.03 per cent and 6.96 per cent a month ago.

The corresponding figures in May 2023 were 5.99 per cent for CPI-AL (Consumer Price Index-Agricultural Labourers) and 5.84 per cent for CPI-RL (Consumer Price Index-Rural Labourers), a labour ministry statement said.

According to the statement, the point-on-point inflation rate based on CPI-AL was recorded at 7.00 per cent in May 2024, showing a deceleration from 7.03 per cent in April this year. The main items that drove the indices were vegetables, pulses, wheat (atta), onion, milk, turmeric whole, ginger, fish fresh, jowar, pan leaf, medicines, shirting cloth, saree, leather chappal, etc., it stated.

A diverse pattern was observed in the indices of constituent states. Bihar experienced a decline for both CPI – AL and RL. The index of agricultural labourers remained stationary for Jammu & Kashmir.. —*PTI*

To grow coal output, Centre auctions 60 coal blocks

NEW DELHI, 21 JUNE

In a bid to increase the coal production in India, the Union Minister of Coal and Mines G Kishan Reddy will launch the 10th round of the commercial coal block auction on Friday.

According to a statement by the Union Ministry of Coal, in this round of coal auction, 60 blocks will be offered.

The Coal India Limited (CIL) had previously awarded 23 coal mines to private sector bidders under a revenue-sharing model, aiming to exploit the latent coal reserves in some of its closed and discontinued underground mines.

The coal mines in the 10th round of allocation are located in Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Telangana and West Bengal. Sixteen mines will be offered in Odisha, followed by Chattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh where 15 coal mines will be auctioned.

According to the Ministry of Coal, so far it has allocated/auctioned 161 coal mines with peak rated capacity of 575 MT. Out of which 58 mines have received mine opening permission and 54 mines are into operation.

Last year these mines have produced total of 147 MT of coal, which constitutes 15 per cent of the total coal production of the country

CIL is also identifying additional mines to attract wider participation, with relaxed bid norms.

Of the 34 identified mines, West Bengal-based Eastern Coalfields Limited and Jharkhand-based Bharat Coking Coal Limited account for 10 each. Western Coalfields Limited has 5, South Eastern Coalfields Limited has 4, Mahanadi Coalfields Limited has 3, and Central Coalfields Limited has 2. —*ANI*

AMID SCORCHING HEAT

Over 50% households consuming soft drinks

NEW DELHI, 21 JUNE

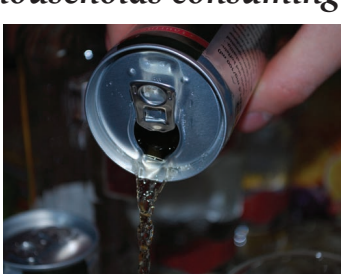
The average Indian household's consumption of bottled soft drinks has increased in the last two years, breaching annual penetration of 50 per cent in FY24, a report said.

According to the latest Kantar FMCG pulse report, this trend is expected to rise further with intensifying summer.

It said the average household has expanded its consumption of bottled soft drinks by 250 ml in the last two years.

Moreover, fabric softeners, still considered to be a premium laundry item, have now reached one in every four households in the country, the report said.

Besides, washing liquids, another premium laundry product introduced by leading FMCG majors, breached the 100,000-tonne mark in FY24. All these trends are "record breakers", the report noted.



Average household has expanded its consumption of bottled soft drinks by 250 ml in the last two years **PHOTO: PIXABAY**

The bottled soft drink category had a "massive 41 per cent household growth in MAT (moving annual total) March 2023" and continued to add more households and expanded 19 per cent in MAT March 2024.

On the consumption, the report said now consumers shop FMCG products 156 times a year, or every 56 hours from online or offline channels.

However, it also added that the average basket value has gone down as shoppers are no longer buying more packs as they were purchasing earlier.

Still, groceries are the biggest household expense, accounting for over 24 per cent of all quarterly expenses in a household, it added.

The report also highlighted that though inflation might have slowed to acceptable levels, its effects are not lost on the consumer.

"The worst of inflation is behind us, however, there are pockets of the market that are still under some stress...the shopper is looking at the future with great optimism, even those who are under stress, and this optimism has been the flag bearer of the Indian consumption story for long now," it said. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Pat Cummins grabs hat-trick, B'desh loses

NORTH SOUND, 21 JUNE

Premier pacer Pat Cummins grabbed the tournament's first hat-trick and spinner Adam Zampa showcased his artistry to fashion Australia's 28-run win over Bangladesh via the Duckworth Lewis (DLS) method in their Super Eights fixture of the T20 World Cup here. If Zampa (2/24) operated with precision in the middle overs, Cummins (3/29) claimed three wickets off successive balls at the back end, as Australia restricted Bangladesh to 140 for eight after Mitchell Marsh opted to bowl first in the rain-interrupted game. Veteran opener David Warner (53 not out off 35 balls) then hit a scintillating half-century, a knock that was studded with five fours and three sixes. Australia 100 for 2 (Warner 53*) beat Bangladesh 140 for 8 (Shanto 41, Hridoy 40, Cummins 3-29) by 28 runs (DLS method).—*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

New Pak Test coach Gillespie to arrive next month

KARACHI, 21 JUNE

Pakistan's new red-ball head coach Jason Gillespie is set to land in the country next month to supervise a training camp for the home series against Bangladesh in August. According to a reliable source in the Pakistan Cricket Board, the camp will be set up in Karachi from July 24 for the probable for the national team as well as the Pakistan Shaheen side (A-Team)."Gillespie will be supervising the camp with the support staff and Shan Masood (Pakistan's Test captain) will also return early from England to prepare for the Bangladesh series in which two tests are to be played," he said.—*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Chaubey should leave soon: Igor Stimac

NEW DELHI, 21 JUNE

Ousted India football coach Igor Stimac on Friday launched a stinging attack on AIFF president Kalyan Chaubey, saying the sooner he leaves the post, the better it would be for the future of football in the country where the globally-loved sport is not growing at all. Stimac was on Monday sacked as head coach following the team's failure to reach the third round of the FIFA World Cup Qualifiers. A day later, the Croat threatened to file a lawsuit against the All India Football Federation (AIFF) in the FIFA Tribunal if his outstanding dues were not cleared in 10 days. During a lengthy online press conference on Friday, Stimac said Indian football is "imprisoned" and blamed Chaubey for most of the problems besetting the game.—*PTI*

Women's PGA: Aditi Ashok fights back

SAMMAMISH, 21 JUNE

Indian golfer Aditi Ashok rebounded from a disappointing front nine of 3-over to finish at even par for the first round in the KPMG Women's PGA Championship here. Aditi, playing her 30th Major, was tied-22nd after the first round. Aditi cut both the Chevron and the US Open this year and this is her third Major of 2024 with Evian and AIG Women's Open still to come. She had bogeys on the first, seventh, and ninth.—*PTI*

EURO 2024

Spain advances to the knockout round beating Italy

Europe beware, Spain might just be back

GELSENKIRCHEN, 21 JUNE

The three-time European champion advanced to the round of 16 at Euro 2024 after a 1-0 win against holders Italy on Thursday.

A 55th-minute own goal by Riccardo Calafiori settled the Group B game at the Veltins Arena in Gelsenkirchen. But that didn't begin to tell the full story of a statement performance from Spain, which surely marks it as one of the favorites to win a record-extending fourth European Championship.

"I think it was the best Spain performance I have taken charge of," coach Luis de la Fuente said. "I don't see a ceiling on this team. The sky is the limit." Europe beware Spain might just be back.

Spain dominated defending champion Italy, with 16-year-old winger Lamine Yamal further enhancing his reputation as one of football's most exciting young stars.

Player of the match Nico Williams also tormented Italy's defenders and was the width of the crossbar away from scoring in the second half.

It took Italy goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma to keep the score down with a string of fine saves until inadvertently pushing the ball into the legs of Calafiori, who couldn't prevent it from ricocheting into his own goal.

Italy's Riccardo Calafiori looks dejected after he scores Spain's first with an own goal
PHOTO: X / @EURO2024

"They deserved to win and we were never in the game," Italy coach Luciano Spalletti said. "There was too much of a gulf. We were constantly stretched, we were never able to squeeze the gaps between the various units and they were able to cause us problems. They caused us more problems than the score line suggests, let's not beat around the bush."

Spain produced a throwback performance that brought to mind the years when it ruled international football winning back-to-back Euros and the World Cup from 2008 through 2012.

- The three-time European champion advanced to the round of 16 at Euro 2024 after a 1-0 win against holders Italy on Thursday.

Having failed to dominate possession for the first time in 136 competitive games in its opening 3-0 win over Croatia, Spain was back to its old ways of starving Italy of the ball and dictating play in a largely lopsided game.

Chances came thick and fast in the first half, with Donnarumma pulling off several saves to keep the score goalless.

—*AP*

Lionel Messi
PHOTO: @COPAAMERICA

Lionel Messi scripts Copa America history

DUBAI, 21 JUNE

Messi, who became the most capped player in Copa America history, making his 35th appearance in what is his seventh tournament, then went close to an opener himself but his angled shot from the left flashed just wide of the far post.

World champions Argentina opened their bid for back-to-back Copa America titles with a 2-0 win over Canada in front of a crowd of 70,564 at Mercedes-Benz Stadium on Thursday. Julian Alvarez put Argentina ahead in the 49th minute but a combination of inspired goalkeeping from Canada's Max Crepeau and Lionel Messi's surprising lack of precision in front of goal ensured that the underdogs were in the game until Lautaro Martinez settled the contest in the 88th minute.

Backed by a huge support decked out in light blue and white striped shirts, Argentina fully deserved their victory but Canada, ranked 48th in the world, can take plenty of credit for the way they fought with the 15-time Copa America winners.

Alvarez, preferred to Lautaro as Messi's strike partners in attack, had the first opportunity when he charged down an attempted clearance from Ismael Kone and broke away.

But the Manchester City striker took a heavy touch as he bore down on Canada keeper Max Crepeau, who was able to smother the ball.

While the Argentines were exploiting gaps in the Canadian defence, Jesse Marsch's team was nonetheless competing in midfield and creating some half-chances for themselves.

Alphonso Davies and Liam Millar both had shots blocked inside the box and Tajon Buchanan screwed an effort from a tight angle wide in the 30th minute.

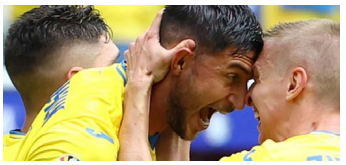
—*AP*

Super-sub Yaremchuk nets winner as Ukraine beats Slovakia

GELSENKIRCHEN, 21 JUNE

Super-sub Roman Yaremchuk's late goal helped Ukraine revive their Euro 2024 hopes with a dramatic 2-1 comeback win against Slovakia in a lively Group E clash on Friday. Trailing at halftime on an early goal by Ivan Schranz, Ukraine's prospects looked bleak, but they staged a spirited comeback in front of their jubilant fans.

Slovakia, fresh off a surprising win against Belgium in their opening match, could have secured a last-16 spot with another victory. However, after a promising start, they faltered by adopting a defensive stance. Mykola Shaparenko equalized in the 54th minute with a close-range finish. The decisive moment came when Yaremchuk controlled a lofted pass from Shaparenko and skillfully beat Slovakia's goalkeeper, Martin Dubravka.


Ukraine's Roman Yaremchuk celebrates scoring the winning goal with Oleksandr Zinchenko
PHOTO: X / @EURO2024

After being thumped 3-0 by Romania in their opening match of the tournament, Ukraine could have been forgiven for fearing the worst when Ivan Schranz gave Slovakia the lead but Mykola Shaparenko levelled things up early in the second half before Roman Yaremchuk's deft winner completed their comeback.

—*AP*

T20 WC: WI to face strong USA

BRIDGETOWN, 21JUNE

West Indies cannot afford another misstep as they take on a tenacious USA outfit in the Super Eights of the T20 World Cup here, seeking to renew their quest for an unprecedented third title.

After remaining unbeaten in the group stage, the West Indies slumped to an eight-wicket loss to defending champions England in their opening Super Eight fixture, paying the price for playing out as many as 51 dot balls and failing to rotate strike. The heavy defeat to England has not only pushed Ravman Powell and his men to the bottom of the group but they now have a -1.343 net run rate and need to win big to keep their hopes of lifting the title at home alive. **WI VS USA match Starts at 6 am IST**.

West Indies Will take on USA, India against Bangladesh PHOTO: @T20WORLDCUP

Pressure building on top-order and Dube as India take on Bangladesh

The ever-present tension of their over a decade-long big-stage rivalry would make for an engrossing sub-plot when an undefeated India takes on a faltering Bangladesh, both teams desperately hoping for their batting stars to strike form in the Super Eights clash of the T20 World Cup here on Saturday.

The overall head-to-head record is overwhelmingly in India's favor but Bangladesh has been known to be plucky and Rohit Sharma and his men would be wary of that.

The two South Asian neighbours have also been locked in some off-field drama in the past with Bangladesh often expressing its misgivings with India's financial might in the sport. At the ongoing World Cup though, there is no doubt that India is as mighty a cricketing power to be a serious title contender. **India vs B'desh match starts at 8 pm IST**

Top state players to feature in Maharaja Trophy

BENGALURU, 21 JUNE

Premier cricketers from Karnataka such as Mayank Agarwal, Devdutt Padikkal, and Vysakh Vijayakumar will feature in the third edition of the Maharaja Trophy KSCA T20, scheduled here between 15 August and 1 September.

All the matches of the tournament will be played at the M Chinnaswamy stadium here. The tournament will see six teams vying for top honors – defending champions Hubli Tigers, last year's runners-up Mysore Warriors, Gulbarga Mystics, Bengaluru Blasters, Mangaluru Dragons, and Shivamogga Lions.

Continuing the format introduced last year, the KSCA T20 will retain the franchise-based model.To ensure continuity, franchises will be allowed to retain players and after that, a player auction will be held featuring a pool of over 700 players."We are thrilled to bring back the Maharaja Trophy KSCA T20 for its third edition. We are committed to providing a platform for both seasoned and emerging talent to showcase their skills," Raghuram Bhat, the KSCA president, said in a press conference to launch the latest edition of the tournament.

PHOTO: PTI

Spin legend EAS Prasanna, who was the chief guest, said: "KSCA has provided a platform for aspiring cricketers.

—*PTI*

Veer, Rashid make the cut at Korea Open

SEOUL, 21 JUNE

India's Veer Ahlawat, Rashid Khan, and S Chikkarangappa carded fine rounds to make the cut in the Kolon Korea Open golf at the Asian Tour.

At the Woo Jeong Hills Country here, Ahlawat (72-70) was tied for 21st, while Rashid (74-71) and Chikkarangappa (71-74) were tied for 54th to cut.

Ajeetesh Sandhu (75-73) and Karandeep Kochhar (77-74) missed out on playing on the weekend. Korea's Kyungnam Kang made the most of his familiarity with the course, taking the halfway lead.

The Korean, runners-up here last year and the course record holder with four other players, played in the afternoon and shot his second four-under-par 67 for a two-round total of eight-under – an impressive tally on a difficult course. It gave him a two-shot cushion over compatriot Minkyu Kim, the 2022 champion. Kim, out in the morning session, held the clubhouse lead for much of the day after returning a 65.

Rashid Khan and Jyoti Randhawa

PHOTO: PTI

Randhawa tied 13th after first day in Irish Legends

India's Jyoti Randhawa fired four birdies against three bogeys to make a smart start at the Irish Legends on the Legends Tour in Europe.

Randhawa is playing his first full season on the Tour for 50 years and over and was placed at tied 13 after the first round.

India's other senior on the Tour, Jeev Milkha Singh shot 74 and was tied 37 after day.

Last week's tournament host Paul Lawrie was relishing the links test on a day with little wind.

The 1999 Open Champion got the turn in 2-under par before making back-to-back birdies at the 10th and 11th holes.

He would make a further four birdies on the back nine, with just the one dropped shot on the way back in as he signed for a round of 67 (-5) and the early clubhouse lead.

—*PTI*

Shreyasi PHOTO: @SINGHSHREYASI

Shreyasi included in Indian squad

NEW DELHI, 21 JUNE

Experienced trap shooter Shreyasi Singh was on Friday included in the final 21-member Indian shooting squad for the Paris Olympics following a quota swap, which needed the approval of the sport's global governing body, ISSF.

The National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) was announced after getting the go-ahead from the International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF), which accepted the NRAI's request for a quota swap.

—*PTI*

PARIS GAMES

Mirabai is determined to remain injury-free

NEW DELHI, 21 JUNE

Olympic silver medallist weightlifter Mirabai Chanu feels her success at the Paris Games will hinge on her ability to remain injury-free, especially as she strives to breach the elusive 90kg mark in the snatch event of the quadrennial extravaganza.

The focus until her competition on August 7 will be on "managing all the muscles" and "improving technique to lift at least 90kg in snatch", said the Manipuri who competes in the 49kg weight class.

"For me, injury management and staying stress-free will be important. I have to do the things that helped me recover," Chanu told SAI Media.

"Injuries and pain are companions for us. You never know when they will strike. We have to conquer them and the Paris Olympics will tell me how well I have managed these aspects of the sport."

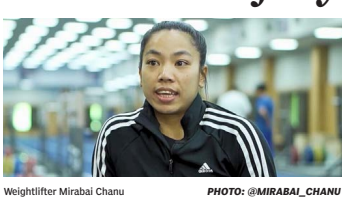
Chanu, who has a personal best of 88kg in snatch and 119kg in clean and jerk, is no stranger to injuries and has struggled with a persistent back problem.

More recently, she suffered from hip tendonitis at the Asian Games in September-October last year, which sidelined her for five months.

She returned to competitive action at the IWF World Cup in April, finishing 12th with a total effort of 184kg (81kg+103kg), a whopping 33kg behind China's Hou Zhihui, who will look to defend her Olympic title.

"After the Asian Games injury, the World Cup was my first competition. I was certainly apprehensive about picking up another injury. I didn't want to spoil my Paris chances. So, yes, that injury fear was there."

Chanu and her team will be off to Le Ferte-Milon in France in the first week of July and will have almost a month to acclimatize ahead of the Olympics.


Weightlifter Mirabai Chanu
PHOTO: @MIRABAI_CHANU

The star weightlifter, for whom the sports ministry, through the Target Olympic

- Olympic silver medallist weightlifter Mirabai Chanu feels her success at the Paris Games will hinge on her ability to remain injury-free, especially as she strives to breach the elusive 90kg mark in the snatch event of the quadrennial extravaganza.

Podium Scheme and other athlete funding programs, has spent over Rs 2.7 crores for her training in the Paris cycle, laments for not having an Asian Games medal in her cabinet.

—*PTI*